ENTERTAINMENT / D4

Dollywood: Director Lino Cayetano now dating KC Concepcion

ENTERTAINMENT / D1

A Review: Metro Manila film fest '06 makes official the death of RP cinema

BUSINESS / B1

Ecozone investments surged 24.6% in '06 from projects worth P83.7B

ACROSS / A13

I need to end poor leadership of Gov. Lapid, Ms Bong Pineda tells bishop

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Thursday, January 4, 2007 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 27 P18 website: inquirer.net

Duterte: Had I been there it would not have happened

By Jeffrey Tupas
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—"THE LEGAL NICETIES WERE not observed here. Had I been there, it would have not happened." Thus, did Mayor Rodrigo Duterte express his opposition to the transfer of the American convict to US custody.

It was an act of disrespect for the Philippine

DUTERTE/ A9

9 teeners killed, 15 injured in road crash

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAPITAN CITY—NINE TEENAGERS WERE killed while 15 others were seriously hurt when their jeepney collided with a truck along the national highway in Bauang, La Union, before dawn yesterday, police said.

The victims had spent the night at a beach re-

9 TEENERS/ A6

Gonzalez: Smith transfer better than pardoning him

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG OFFICIALS INSIST THAT they did the "right thing" in not letting convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith stay a day longer at the Makati City Jail, saying the alternative would have been to pardon him.

"My golly, it's better that way. What would they want? That we will just let the judgment become final and then pardon him?" Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said.

Asked to comment on criticisms that the transfer to US custody was rushed, Gonzalez, in an interview with the INQUIRER after a briefing in Malacañang, replied: "*Buti na lang di pinardon si* Smith (It's good Smith was not pardoned)."

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, who carried out the transfer of Smith from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy in Manila on the night of Dec. 29, pointed to Gonzalez as the brains of the operation.

"We spent enough time receiving

GONZALEZ/ A8

LYN RILLON

THE BACKROOM BOYS: Interior Secretary Puno, confessed implementor of Smith's transfer, Executive Secretary Ermita, true believer in the Balikatan, and Justice Secretary Gonzalez, the "brains of the [transfer] operation," hold a press briefing to explain their actions over again.

CA: Custody issue moot

But upholds Pozon on RP jurisdiction over convicted rapist

By Armand N. Nocum and Volt Contreras

IT APPEARS LIKE THE FILIPINO WOMAN WHO won a historic rape case against Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith has scored a victory in the battle for custody of the US Marine—on paper.

Ruling yesterday on Smith's petition for a temporary restraining order on his confinement at the Makati City Jail, the Court of Appeals asserted the power of the Philippine government over visiting US troops, which it described as a "lethal weapon." *(Highlights of the decision on Page A9.)*

But the appellate court said it could not do much in the custody dispute because a new agreement that resulted in Smith's midnight transfer back to the US Embassy last Dec. 29 had rendered the matter "moot."

While it affirmed the legality of Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon's decision to commit Smith at the city jail, upheld the Philippines' "exclusive jurisdiction" over the American soldier, and stressed that he should be held in a Philippine detention facility, the appellate court also said it could not fully intervene in diplomatic concerns.

In a 38-page ruling written by

CA CUSTODY/ A8

SOLOMONIC RULING

Both Smith, Nicole camps claim victory

By Tarra Quismundo, Norman Bordadora and TJ Burgonio

THE COURT OF APPEALS' DECISION on the custody of an American rape convict has appeased the opposing camps, with both prosecution and defense lawyers claiming to be winners.

"It's a victory of sorts, a vindication of our position, because in effect the court said the government was wrong in returning [Lance Cpl. Daniel] Smith to the US Embassy," Evalyn Ursua, lawyer of the Filipino complainant "Nicole," said yesterday.

"Had the executive branch of the government awaited the resolution, it would have lost the case," Ursua said. "It is a slap in the face of the executive branch. At least, the courts are showing independence. The [appellate

BOTH/ A8

RYAN LIM

WALTZING WITH THE ENEMY: Arm in arm, President Arroyo and her arch critic, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero, stand as principal sponsors at the wedding of lawyer Karlo Nograles and Marga Montemayor at the St. Joseph's Cathedral in Davao City on Wednesday. The groom is the son of House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles. Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte is conspicuously absent.

Stocks surge to near 10-year high; peso continues to gain

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez and Doris C. Dumlao

SHARE PRICES SURGED YESTERDAY TO A near 10-year high, breaching a critical 3,000 psychological mark, because of positive economic prospects, fund managers said.

Also yesterday, the peso extended its gains to hit a new six-year high of 48.825 before closing at 48.88 against the US dollar.

The peso on Tuesday broke into the 48 level against the US dollar, closing at P48.915, due to remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) that piled up during the long holiday break and investments into the stock market.

Total volume at the Philippine Dealing System was $579 million.

The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)—a barometer of business confidence—jumped 43.85 points or 1.47 percent to end at 3,020.70. It hit a day high of 3,028.41.

This was the first time the index closed above the 3,000-point level since it ended at 3,060.59 points on April 4, 1997, the PSE said.

"The macroeconomics picture is very positive. It's a perfect scenario that is conducive for the bull market to be sustained," said Jose Vistan, AB Capital Securities research director.

Vistan said the index was likely to test the 3,400-point resistance level this year, although congressional and local elections in May and a possible global economic slowdown may create a market overhang.

The value of stocks traded yesterday hit P2.3 billion with 76 gainers and 35 losers.

Total foreign buying hit P865.16 million, while foreign selling amounted to P900.51 million.

"Our market is off to a good start in 2007, and the strong finish of the PSEi today has buoyed our expectations that the New Year will usher in more growth for the local stock

STOCKS SURGE/ A8

Graying Japan opens door to 1st RP nurses

CHEERING UP THE ELDERLY: Caregiver Maria Falqueza, 25, of Manila, celebrates New Year's Eve with her new friends. AFP

TOKYO—ASK WHEELCHAIR-bound 81-year-old Hisae Kajiwara about the new workers at her nursing home and a smile comes to her face.

"They are really cheerful and make the atmosphere here very bright," she says.

Another woman confined to a wheelchair, 79-year-old Mitsu Sekiguchi, chimes in: "And they always make the beds just perfectly."

Normally, the arrival of new nurses at the care facility in Tokyo's western fringes would be a mere question of personnel. But this time, it represents a fresh step for Japan.

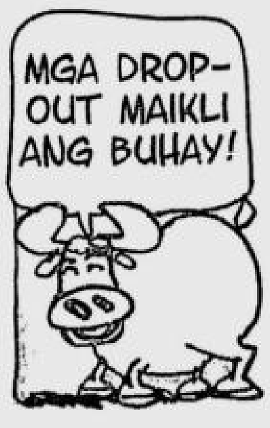
Maria Falqueza, 25, and Olivia Pineda, 30, are among the first Filipino nurses at care facilities in Japan, which has signed a landmark free trade agreement with the Philippines. The pact has broken precedent as it allowed foreign workers to come into Japan.

A handful of care support facilities have accepted Falqueza, Pineda and 13 other Filipinos as trainees—a prelude to the full-fledged entry of Filipino nurses into Japan.

After intense negotiations, then Japanese Prime Minister Ju-

GRAYING/ A6

If you want to live long, stay in school


MGA DROP-OUT MAIKLI ANG BUHAY!

JAMES SMITH, A HEALTH ECONOMIST at RAND Corp., has heard a variety of hypotheses about what it takes to live a long life—money, lack of stress, a loving family, lots of friends. But he has been a skeptic.

Yes, Smith says, it is clear that on average some groups in every society live longer than others. The rich live longer than the poor, whites live longer than blacks in the United States. Longevity, in general, is not evenly distributed in the population.

IF YOU WANT/ A6

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Second FRONT PAGE

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern sections of Central and Northern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers. Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with light rainshowers.

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/01/03/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

JOAN BONDOC

VALERA: Not yet off the hook on Bersamin murder.

Abra gov free on bail

By Alcuin Papa

ABRA GOV. VICENTE VALERA POSTED bail yesterday for charges of illegal possession of firearms but remains under investigation for his alleged participation in the murder of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin.

Director Jesus Versoza, outgoing chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), said Valera was "definitely" not yet off the hook in the Bersamin case.

"The investigation which led to his detention was for illegal possession of firearms. We are looking at a probable connection between the firearms seized from him to that of the murder," Versoza said.

Versoza said Valera was a suspect in the murder of Bersamin who was shot to death on the grounds of the Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City last Dec. 16.

"He is a suspect. Everyone is a suspect," the police director said.

Valera has denied any involvement in the murder of Bersamin but has yet to make a statement to police investigators.

He left the Philippine National Police custodial center at 4:40 p.m. yesterday.

Earlier, police arrested a former soldier Rufino Panday, who said in a sworn statement that Freddie Dupo, the former vice mayor of La Paz, Abra, had told him that Valera had put out a P5 million contract for Bersamin's murder.

Verzosa has said that Panday's testimony would not be enough to pin down Valera.

"We are still building a case. We are collecting and assessing various evidence we have gathered," he said yesterday.

He said the six guns, a 9mm assault rifle and five .45 caliber pistols, recovered from Valera's car have been sent for ballistic tests and could reveal if these were used in the Bersamin slaying.

If the tests reveal a match with slugs recovered from the Bersamin murder scene, police could immediately file murder charges against Valera, he said.

Even if he has now been designated chief of the Philippine National Police's Directorial Staff, Versoza said he would still be supervising the Bersamin murder investigation.

The Chief of the Directorial Staff handles all the paperwork for the PNP Chief. Director Edgardo Doromal has taken over as CIDG chief from Versoza.

On Dec. 29, Valera was stopped by police at Commonwealth Ave. He was traveling on a Chevrolet Suburban without license plates and using a siren.

He was brought to Camp Crame and charged with illegal possession of firearms after police found seven guns and a grenade inside the vehicle.

After spending the New Year in jail, Valera posted a P310,000 bond before Quezon City Judge Thelma Ponferrada.

The bail also covered charges for violating the no-plate-no-travel policy.

Valera told reporters in Quezon City that he plans to rest in Metro Manila and talk to his lawyers before returning to Abra.

All systems go for postponed Asean summit

LEADERS FROM 16 ASIAN NATIONS have confirmed they will attend a rescheduled summit in Cebu next week, organizers said yesterday, while the military said they saw no security threat to the gathering.

The East Asia summit was postponed from December, ostensibly, because of concerns over an incoming typhoon. News reports also spoke of warnings from the US, British and Australian governments of plans for a terrorist bomb attack.

"On the ground, there is no threat, there is no validated threat," military spokesman Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro told reporters.

He said about 5,500 soldiers and 7,000 policemen would be on duty on Cebu during the Jan. 10 to 15 meeting.

Dignitaries

"The Armed Forces of the Philippines component, in coordination with the Philippine National Police, will be able to provide security to the dignitaries who are arriving," he said.

The summit will bring together presidents and prime ministers from Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea with leaders from the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean).

Marciano Paynor, secretary general of the Asean organizing committee, told Reuters that all the leaders had confirmed their attendance.

Senior officials from the region were to meet on Jan. 10, with foreign ministers conferring on Jan. 11 and 12. Leaders would meet over the next three days, he said.

Terror threat

"All preparations, all systems are go," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters earlier in the day.

"The threat of terrorism is always present, summit or no summit. But the government agencies like the police, the armed forces and the Anti-Terrorism Task Force are ready and prepared to counter any threat."

Asean comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Reuters

PCGG rejects 50-50 split of Marcos deposits

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON GOOD Government has rejected an offer from the lawyer of human rights victims to split "50-50" a disputed account of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos being held by the Singapore branch of a German bank.

PCGG legal affairs director Jay Miguel said the deal being offered by lawyer Rod Domingo Jr. was "absurd," as it would be in effect a compromise agreement that would undermine the government's position in current and future cases to recover ill-gotten assets.

Miguel said agreeing to split with Marcos rights abuse victims the $25 million in the West Landesbank (WestLB) would mean subjecting the Philippine government to the jurisdiction of the Singaporean legal system—a stance that is inconsistent with the PCGG's position in its 20-year effort to recover the ill-gotten wealth of Marcos, his family and associates.

"His proposal is absurd," said Miguel.

He said the PCGG would be breaking the law if enters into such a compromise agreement as the law mandates that all proceeds from its recovery efforts should go to the agrarian reform program.

Miguel wondered whether Domingo made to offer in order to put the PCGG on the defensive by making it look bad to the public if it rejects the offer.

"The human rights victims should go after Marcos' estate. This money is not part of his estate since it is ill-gotten," he said.

The disputed funds are part of the Marcos Swiss deposits that were ordered transferred to the government after the Philippine Supreme Court ruled that they were ill-gotten.

The $25 million is part of the original $356 million (grown to $658 million) taken from five Liechtenstein foundations—deemed to be Marcos front organizations—which kept the funds in Swiss banks.

The money was being held in escrow by the Philippine National Bank, the court-appointed escrow agent, while the cases against the Marcoses were being decided in the courts.

When the SC decision declaring the Marcos deposits ill-gotten and the order to transfer the $658 million to the Philippine government came, the WestLB branch in Singapore refused to release the $25 million until a Singapore court ruled on their ownership.

The $25 million is being claimed by the government, the Golden Buddha Corp. and the estate of Roger Roxas, and the Marcos rights abuse victims to settle part of the $2 billion judgment that they won against the Marcos estate in a United States court in 1995.

Last week the Singapore appellate court rejected a motion from the Philippine government to stop the proceedings to determine the ownership of the $25 million, effectively ensuring that a lengthy court case among the competing claimants will continue.

Group wants voter listing extended

By Jerome Aning

A YOUTH POLL WATCHDOG YESTERDAY asked the Commission on Elections to extend the registration of qualified new voters until the end of January.

The Youth Volunteers for an Orderly and Transparent 2007 Elections (YouthVOTE), said many young qualified voters missed their chance to register last month because the information campaign regarding the registration was overshadowed by the Christmas holiday fever.

Also, politicians' proposals to postpone the May 2007 elections to pave the way for a plebiscite to convert the current system of government to a unicameral parliamentary form also caused "confusion" among the youth, the group said.

"We sensed a drive among the youth to participate in the elections and we feel that we should further encourage that if we want to have a significant change in the way the next elections is conducted and its outcome," said YouthVOTE spokesman Joe Mandia.

"A few weeks or even days extension will matter a lot," he added.

YouthVOTE was the second group to appeal for an extension. The party-list group Abakada-Guro earlier petitioned Comelec to extend registration until Jan. 15, the start of election period, because many were busy during the holidays or were on vacation so they were unable to register.

The group said they also received reports of "difficulties" many young people faced when signing up for registration.

Among these were complaints of "quota systems" in Manila, wherein Comelec officials allegedly limited the number of allowed registrations. There were also reports that barangay and police officials overpriced the IDs and certificates they issue to take advantage of the rush of registrants.

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₱200 security fee a big burden, airlines complain

By Nikko Dizon

AIRLINE COMPANIES OPERATING out of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) are not inclined to include a proposed ₱200 security fee in airline tickets, according to a well-placed airport source.

"It will be an extra burden to the airlines, particularly because it will entail additional administrative work on their part," said the source, who asked not to be named.

But the Board of Airline Representatives has yet to make a final decision on the matter, according to Felix Cruz, a Philippine Airlines (PAL) official, who is president of the BAR.

"It's not right to say that we have already turned it down because no final decision has been made yet," Cruz said in a phone interview.

He said many members of the BAR, the airlines' country managers, were still abroad on holiday break.

But Cruz agreed with some of the points raised by the airport source.

"We have to consider the administrative implications because we would have to collect from airline ticket offices from all over the world. You can't expect all ticket offices not to commit a mistake," he said.

The airlines would have to remit the P200 security fee to the Manila International Airport Aurhority (Miaa), just like it does the P1,680 travel tax usually included in the airline ticket.

"If it wasn't charged properly, then the burden of paying it would rest on the airline," Cruz said.

Aside from the travel tax, insurance charges and fuel surcharges are also charged in the airline ticket.

Another source of concern for the airlines is the exemption of the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from paying the security fee. According to Cruz, there is no way for airlines to determine which passengers are OFWs and which are regular air travelers.

"We know it's the law but there could be a problem there," Cruz said.

And while the airlines support the installation of new security equipment at the Naia terminals, they are also concerned that their passengers would be paying "more money for traveling if you add it all up," he said.

Miaa officials earlier said they were still hopeful that the BAR would agree to tucking the security fee on to the airline ticket.

If the airlines decline, the Miaa may have to collect the additional charge at the booths where passengers pay the P550 terminal fee.

The Miaa, which would like to begin charging the P200 security fee not later than Jan. 15, expects to collect some P3.5 billion in five years from the security fee.

Coast Guard wants diesel tanker seized

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD has requested the Bureau of Customs to issue a warrant to take custody of the tanker with 600,000 liters of diesel that was apprehended on New Year's Day on suspicion that it was involved in smuggling.

PCG Pasig Station head Lt. Com. Wifred Burgos said he asked the BOC to issue the warrant of seizure and detention (WSD) for the MT Patricia, which had come from Subic, because it had jurisdiction over alleged violations of the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines.

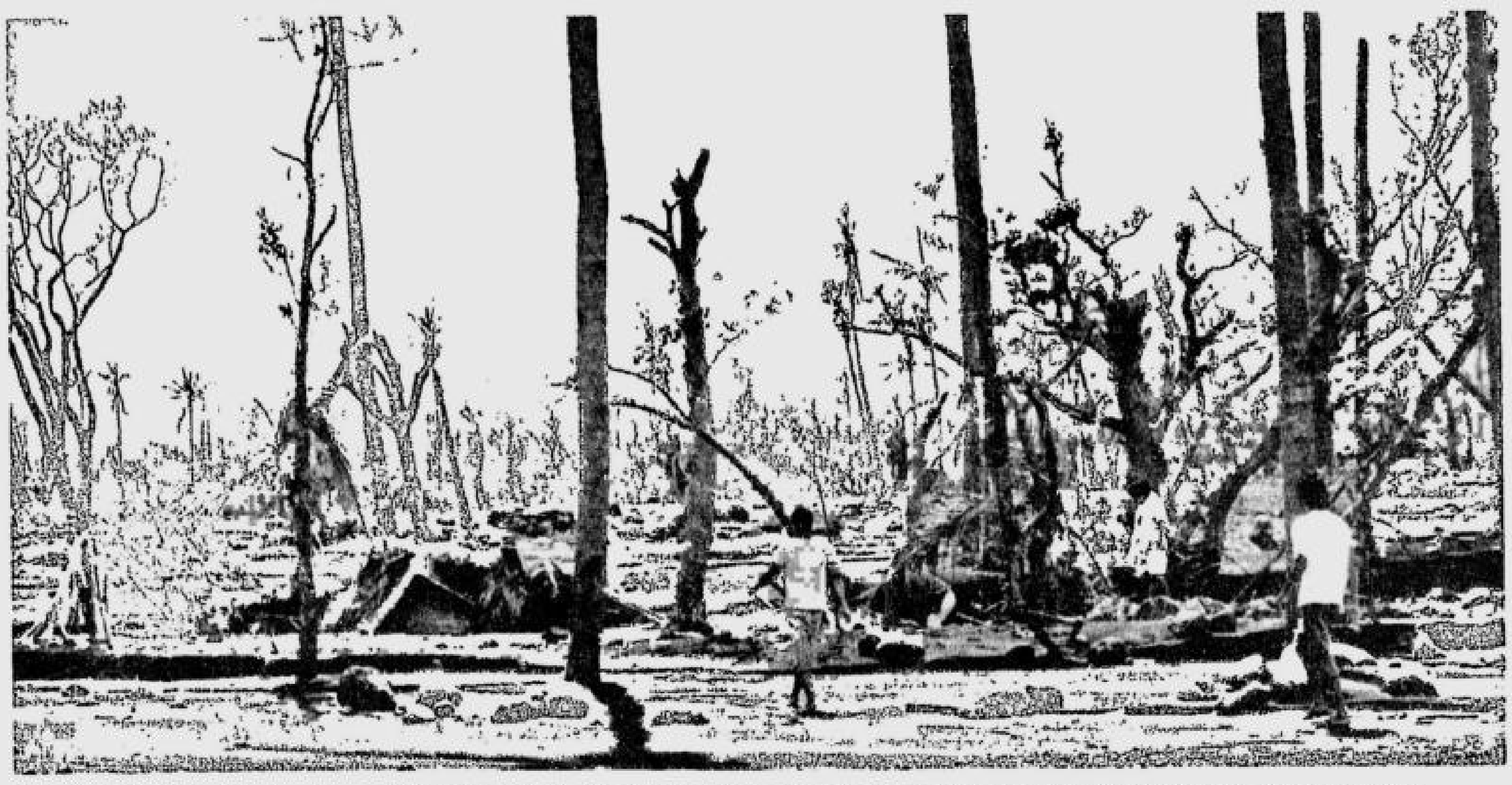
Once the BOC issues the WSD, it is expected to conduct a hearing during which the tanker's owner would be allowed to contest the seizure of the cargo.

While the issuance of the warrant is pending, representatives from the Task Force Anti-Smuggling inspected the tanker yesterday.

The TFAS is headed by the customs commissioner and also counts as its members' representatives from the coast guard, the police and the military.

The PCG was also expected to conduct its own investigation of the tanker.

Burgos said that without instructions to turn over the MT Patricia to the customs bureau, the tanker would stay at the PCG's Pasig station. He said the tanker would be guarded, and its crew would also not be allowed to leave it.



DESOLATION. Residents return to their village buried by mudflow in Padang, Legazpi City on Dec. 3 in the aftermath of supertyphoon "Reming." The second supertyphoon to hit the area unleashed rampaging floodwaters and volcanic debris from nearby Mayon volcano devastating huge areas and straining the resources of relief agencies like the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Bicol was the hardest hit in a series of typhoon that hit the country toward the end of the year.
AFP

A year of calamities: No relief for DSWD

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL Welfare and Development (DSWD) released P183.16 million in 2006 for the relief and rehabilitation of more than 8 million families affected by major natural and man-made disasters.

"Looking back, the year carried with it an immense responsibility which the DSWD met successfully," said Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral.

The agency was kept on its toes by the following calamities: the stampede at Ultra (renamed PhilSports Arena); the landslide in St. Bernard, Southern Leyte; flash floods in Caraga; seismic activities in Mt. Bulusan and Mt. Mayon; the oil spill in Guimaras; and typhoons Caloy, Henry, Milenyo, Paeng, Reming and Seniang.

"Though overwhelmed by the huge task we had to face, we remained steadfast in our resolve to help our less fortunate countrymen rebuild their lives," Cabral said.

The DSWD was at the frontline assisting victims of the Guinsaugon landslide, considered one of the worst disasters in the country as well as the victims of the supertyphoons and other calamities. It provided technical assistance along disaster management, critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) sessions to the survivors, bereaved families and orphaned children.

With funding assistance from Japan and Habitat for Humanity, the DSWD has constructed 100 houses and is constructing another 417, costing P40.22 million for 500 displaced families.

It also provided relief goods and instituted a work program, as well as capital assistance in the rehabilitation phase of disaster management.

Filipino resiliency

The success stories, Cabral attributed to the resiliency of the Filipinos, their ability to pick up the pieces after a disaster and carry on.

"Thanks [too] to the the men and women [in the DSWD] who displayed exemplary service and commitment to serve the less fortunate," she said.

The DSWD also took on the challenge of implementing propoor programs which were in consonance with the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan and the Ten-Point Legacy Agenda of the Arroyo administration.

Cabral said the DSWD's Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS) continued to empower people in the rural areas.

Kalahi-CIDSS is a community-driven development project that seeks to empower communities and enhance citizen participation in local governance and in community projects that reduce poverty. It provides grants for community-driven development projects.

Self-sufficiency

In Magwawa, Davao del Norte, farmers used to transport their corn to the town to have it milled. Now they mill their own produce.

In Olave, Siquijor, barrio folks hauled 22 logs up the mountain to install powerlines. Now, they are enjoying the benefits and convenience of electricity.

In Barangay Magdum, Tagum City in Davao del Norte, 25 women organized a livelihood project that now gives them additional income.

As of Oct. 31, 2006, Kalahi-CIDSS has funded a total of 2,451 community projects amounting to P2.9 billion in 2,579 barangays. Majority of these projects are water systems, farm-to-market roads, post-harvest facilities, school buildings, and health centers.

Pro-poor projects

Kalahi-CIDSS plans to cover 4,250 barangays in 183 municipalities in the 42 poorest provinces in the country by 2009. It is expected to benefit the poorest 1.1 million households or 6.6 million Filipinos nationwide.

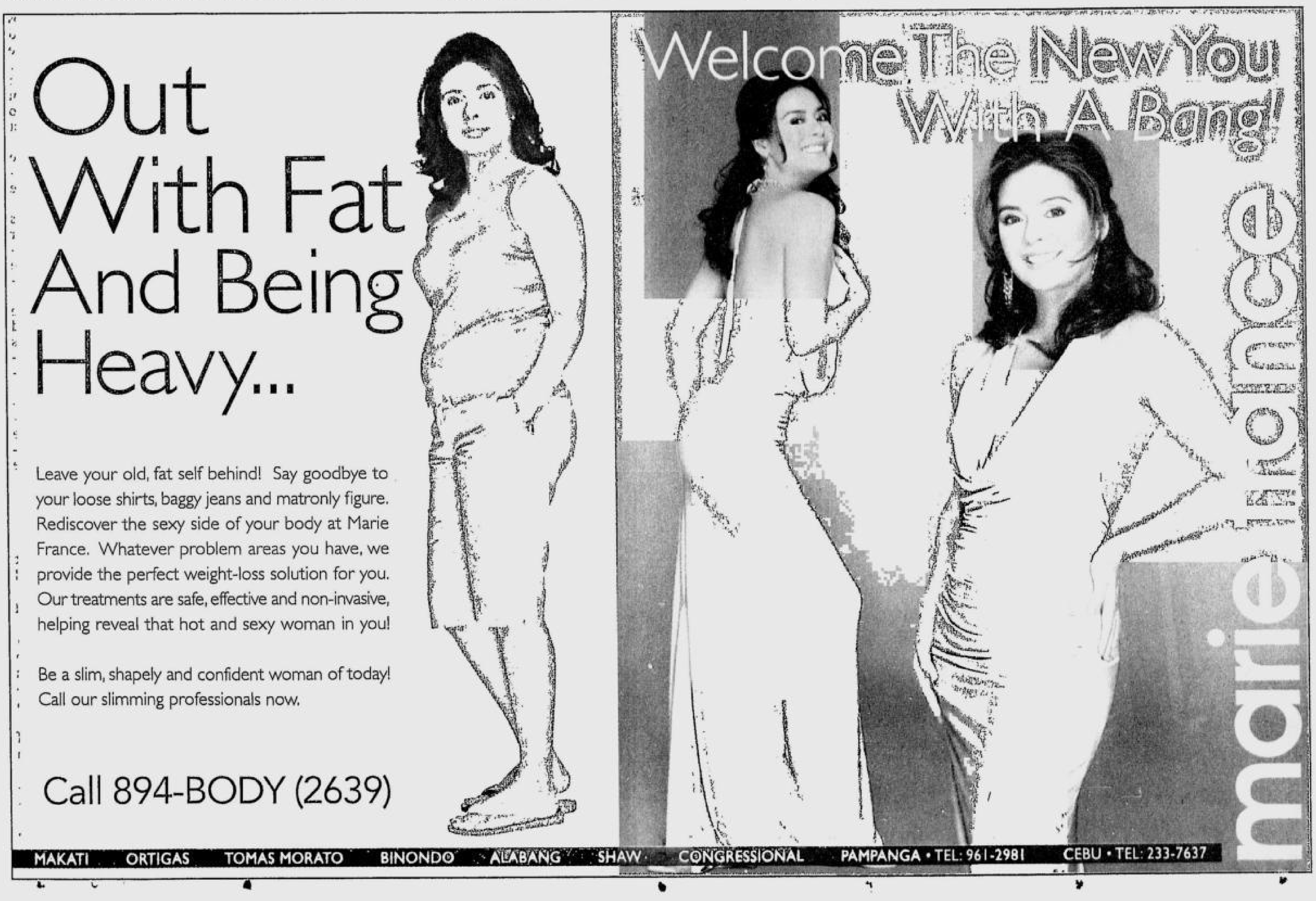
The newest addition to the DSWD's pro-poor initiatives was the Tindahan Natin project which provides basic commodities to the poorest communities at lower-than-market prices.

CABRAL

To date, the DSWD has funded 1,171 Tindahan Natin outlets at a cost of P21.56 million. About 1.67 million families have bought rice and noodles at these lower prices from Tindahan Natin outlets.

In June this year, the DSWD had a tie-up with the UN World Food Program for the implementation of a food program dubbed "Emergency Operation Philippine-Assistance to Conflict Affected Mindanao" (EMOP-ACAM), to benefit residents of Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao.

As of September 2006, the project has distributed 1,460 metric tons of rice, corn-soya meal blend, oil and sugar to the families of 9,500 infants and pregnant or lactating women, 35,300 children in primary schools and 8,200 children in preschools and day care centers.



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Russians lured to RP by beaches, weather

By Nikko Dizon

RUSSIANS LIKE THE PHILIPpines' tropical weather, its beaches, and the friendly people-which is why they keep on coming back.

Yesterday, 140 Russian tourists arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) on board a chartered Vladisvostok flight from Russia for a two-week holiday in Boracay.

"Russia is really an emerging market in our tourism industry," said Carla Mariano, a manager at the Blue Horizon Travel, the group's tour organizer.

Mariano said that Blue Horizon alone organizes tours for two chartered flights of Russian tourists annually.

"We have returning clients. They have a lot of fond, good memories of the Philippines," Mariano said.

Each Russian tourist spends some US$800 to $1,000 per person for a two-week vacation in the Philippines, she added.

"The Russians like the beaches, the weather, and the friendly people in the Philippines," said Neyla Schneider, the travel agency's interpreter for the group.

Russian tourists are using their winter holiday break to tour the Philippines.

They have been arriving for a vacation almost every week since December last year.

Tomorrow, another group of 250 Russians—the biggest tour group for the season—will be arriving in Manila on board another chartered flight.

Still, Thailand gets the bulk of Russian tourists and the Philippines is only their second choice, Mariano said.

But the Philippine government remains bullish in its effort to promote the country as a top tourist destination.

Mariano said that together with Tourism Secretary Ace Durano, Philippine travel agencies attend the Leisure Travel Fair in Moscow where they link up with different travel agencies in Russia.

ВЛАДИВОСТОК

PLANELOAD of Russians disembark on their way to Boracay.

JESS YUSON

Corrections

IN THE DEC. 31, 2006, ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A7 misspelled the name of the best supporting actress of the Metro Manila Film Festival. The correct spelling of the actress' name is Gina Pareño—not Parino.

* * *

IN THE JAN. 2, 2007, ISSUE, a front-page story—"Bilibid 'Starbucks' offers coffee, bread, livelihood"—misstated the name of the Sigma Rho member who was killed 12 years ago on the campus of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City. The name of the Sigma Rho member is Dennis Venturina—not Ventura.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A7 misstated that Abra Gov. Vicente Valera spent Christmas and New Year's Eve in Camp Crame where he was detained for illegal possession of firearms. Valera was arrested only on Dec. 29, 2006, and did not spend Christmas inside the camp.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, an Across the Nation story on Page A13—"1 week of rains kills 4, displaces thousands in Northern, East Samar"—misspelled the surname and misstated the position of an official who was among those displaced by the flood in Eastern Samar. The official's name is Fulgencio Pajanustan—not Fajanustan—Sr. He is not the vice governor of Eastern Samar but the vice mayor of Jipadpad town.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a Page A14 photo of a man selling flowers at the Jaro Plaza in Iloilo carried the wrong caption. The Across the Nation photo should have carried this caption—"COMPETING WITH FIRECRACKERS. A man tends to his stall of flowers at the Jaro Plaza in Iloilo City, hours before New Year's Eve. Near his stall are stores and vendors selling firecrackers."

NO ALLOCATION, NO ELECTION

Senators allay Comelec fears on budget

By TJ Burgonio and Gil C. Cabacungan, Jr.

SENATORS YESTERDAY ALLAYED FEARS aired by Commission on Elections chief Benjamin Abalos Jr. that the non-passage of the P1.126 trillion proposed budget for 2007 would imperil the holding of the national elections in May.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. remained optimistic that both the Senate and the House of Representatives could break the deadlock on the budget and approve it at the end of the month at the earliest.

Congress, he said, has between Jan. 30 and mid-February to pass the measure. "There's no reason to be apprehensive about that. There will be funding," he said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is appealing to Congress to break the deadlock on the 2007 budget which could jeopardize funding for major infrastructure and social service projects as well as the May elections.

"If Congress will pass the budget, it will contribute greatly to our programs for livelihood, education, health, housing and food, including the grant of one kilo or rice everyday to hungry families. Aside from this, we can hasten and broaden the rehabilitation of areas devastated by super typhoons, floods, and volcanic explosions in the past year," said the President in a televised round table discussion in Malacañang yesterday.

Congress adjourned last Dec. 21 for the holiday season without enacting the budget measure after failing to break the deadlock on the P4.7 billion fund for the Department of Education's school feeding program. It resumes sessions on Jan. 22.

The House had insisted that the P4.7 billion be retained as originally proposed by Malacañang. But the Senate panel wanted the funds realigned instead for the building of more classrooms and hiring of more teachers on suspicion the funds could be diverted for electoral purposes this year.

Since Jan. 1, the government has started to operate on the rolled-over P907.56-billion 2005 budget.

But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government has not given up on the 2007 budget considering that "we still have 27 days or more than three weeks to pass it."

Ermita however said the government was already preparing for a reprise of the last two years' budget. "We discussed this in the Cabinet and the administration is prepared for it."

On the other hand, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya is proposing that Congress pass a supplemental budget to bankroll items that were not in the old budget such as the May elections.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said that both chambers could always pass a supplemental budget to fund the mid-term elections if they fail to pass the measure on time.

Abalos had called on Congress to pass the 2007 budget, warning that the elections would not push through unless there are sufficient funds. The Comelec needs P4 billion for the holding of the May elections.

To break the deadlock, Sen. Ralph Recto has proposed that the excess of P6.6 billion in the allocation for debt service payments next year be used to close the gaps in classrooms and teachers.

He agreed with the retention of the P4.7 billion in DepEd's school feeding program, but the program should be implemented in June to erase suspicions the funds would be used for electoral purposes.

Under the food for school program, the government aims to address hunger among the poor through the daily distribution of one kilo of rice to school children. The DepEd is the lead implementing agency for Grade 1 pupils and department-supervised pre-school children. The Department of Social Welfare and Development implements the program for day-care center children.

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DISASTROUS EFFECT

Labor chief warns against wage hike

By Jerome Aning

THE PASSAGE OF THE PROPOSED P125 LEGislated across-the-board wage hike will be "disastrous for labor and employment," said Labor Secretary Arturo Brion, warning that it could lead to the displacement of almost 1.1 million workers in the next three years.

Brion said the initial P45 across-the-board wage hike will take a toll on inflation, unemployment and GDP (gross domestic product) growth, citing a study from the National Economic Development Authority (Neda).

Across-the-board means that all 12.4 million salaried workers in private establishments, not just minimum wage earners, will get the P125 wage increase.

Brion said only the big companies had the resources to comply with a legislated increase, and expressed concern about how micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) would cope.

About 99.6 percent of business establishments in the country are small and medium scale enterprises, he said.

Wary of timing

Francis Chua, president of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce Inc., expressed concern about the timing of the push for a legislated wage hike in an election year.

"I think we should be wary of politicians using the legislated wage hike to boost their candidacy. Politicians will promise anything just to please their constituencies even though it will not be economically viable," said Chua.

Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr., president of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, deplored "the prevailing highly populist orientation" to continue increasing the benefits of workers in the formal sector "in complete disregard of the stark realities of the Philippine labor market characterized by increasing chronic unemployment and underemployment, shrinking formal sector and an expanding informal sector."

The Ecop urged the Senate to junk House Bill No. 345, which the House of Representatives approved on third and final reading before it went for its Christmas recess in late December.

The bill provides for wage increases to be given on a staggered basis, starting with P45 this year, P40 in the second year, and P40 in the third and final year.

Micro enterprises imperil

ECOP chair Miguel Varela said the efforts of the business community to keep the economy afloat would be put to naught by the legislated wage hike.

Ortiz-Luis said a P125 across-the-board legislated wage hike would accelerate the demise of hundreds of thousands of micro establishments and small and medium enterprises, which are the key generators of employment and economic dynamism.

He said that from 1999 to 2003, employment in the formal sector dropped by 307,228 while employment in the informal sector expanded by nearly two million.

The informal sector includes family-based or unregistered economic units, industrial home workers, the self-employed and unpaid family workers.

"These should be cause for concern for policymakers, as this pattern is inconsistent with the progressive increase of the labor force, employment and of economic growth," Ortiz-Luis argued.

He warned that if the legislators insist on imposing a legislated wage hike, "more and more businesses would have no choice but to go underground."

Palace preference

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government was "sensitive" to the concerns of businessmen and assured them the government would continue to uphold the policy of wage adjustments being decided of regional boards.

BRION

Ermita said that Malacañang would "prefer" that demands for salary hikes be coursed through the tripartite regional wage boards because they were in the best position to determine adjustments based on prevailing local conditions and the capacity of employers.

But he said the government would not stop Congress from pursuing the bills calling for a P125 increase in the minimum wage.

"We cannot go against the wishes of Congress, these are our legislators, they are the ones who will pass this," he said.

But when the bill on the legislated wage hike goes to the President, "she will have to take some factors [into consideration] on what decision she will take."

"We have to hear them [the businessmen] out," said Ermita.

Militant labor groups described the ECOP position as "false and full of blackmail."

Spread over 3 years

"When did economic relief in the form of wage increase for overworked and underpaid workers become an economic disaster? When did a rise in the purchasing power become disastrous to the lives of workers?" asked Leody de Guzman, president of the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino.

"The proposed increase will be spread over three years. As such any impact, if any, would be positive," said Joshua Mata, president of the Alliance of Progressive Labor.

"It will redistribute income at a time when the economy is supposed to be growing and the increased purchasing power will then spur demand that can hopefully lead to a higher economic level," he said. *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

SENATE RACE

Admin, opposition slates in the works

ADMINISTRATION AND OPPOSITION PARties have begun their respective hunt for candidates that they hope are both "principled" and "winnable" in the coming mid-term polls.

It's a tall order in the personality-centered world of Philippine politics, often described as a kaleidoscope of ever-shifting loyalites.

"What's the sense in getting people who, after the election, will not go with the administration. We hope that when we have a lineup, those who win will live by their commitment," summed up Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, spokesperson of President Macapagal-Arroyo in a media briefing yesterday.

The bottomline is "winnability," agreed Ermita. But it is also important to choose only "steadfast individuals," he added, considering the administration's bad experience with Cabinet members, government executives, judicial appointees and Congressional allies who turned their backs on their patron after the 2004 elections.

Ermita said Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio already has a short list of names that President Arroyo would consider as her team for the 2007 polls.

The administration will be banking on the campaign management expertise of Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, who suggests that the ruling party "reduce the aspect of personalities in senatorial elections and bring in the aspect of ideology" as their best chance to get good results.

Puno, by the way, was once the chief strategist of Arroyo's foe, deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Advises Puno: "We have to focus on economic programs and results because if we talk personalities, we will lose... the leading candidates are on the other side."

The opposition seems to be in a similar predicament.

"We cannot have as candidates people who have been inconsistent in their political position, and those who are in the opposition but will later be pro-administration. We cannot have people who are wishy-washy," said opposition leader and Makati City Mayor Jejomar Binay in a press conference yesterday of the newly formed United Opposition (UNO).

Still, Binay announced that the opposition coalition's senatorial ticket in the 2007 elections would be led by former vice president Teofisto Guingona, remembered for his famous "I accuse" speech that snowballed into a huge corruption scandal and eventually a people power revolt against Estrada. However, Guingona later resigned from the succeeding Arroyo government and supported Estrada's proxy, Fernando Poe Jr., who fought Arroyo for the presidency.

A year after Ms Arroyo was reelected, she again appointed Guingona as ambassador to China. He accepted, but he again resigned amid the "Hello Garci" scandal, a wiretapped conversation between the President and an election commissioner that seemed to suggest vote rigging.

Binay said Guingona "has faced water cannons and he is always in rallies, so what is there to question about his health?"

On the other members of the UNO slate, Binay said he could not yet give out names. "The candidates must agree on the platform of UNO... But I assure you that all of them have the track record of being in the opposition," said Binay.

Binay said the opposition's campaign will be centered on anomalies where the current administration is involved, including the unsettled question on the legitimacy of President Arroyo's win in the last elections. *With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Tarra V. Quismundo*

Reyes still counting trees, not yet votes

By Norman Bordadora

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY ANGELO Reyes said about a million new trees were planted last year along the country's national highways from northern Luzon to southern Mindanao, and he will see that even more are planted this year.

"We will engage in massive, national reforestation. Greening efforts will not only be on highways but also in all open spaces and denuded forests," said the environment czar in a get-together with reporters over the holidays.

Reyes, former Armed Forces chief of staff, said he would also speed up the rehabilitation of Metro Manila's murky Pasig River in 2007.

"The job may take five to seven years, but we will try to finish it faster."

Reyes has been reported to be one of the officials of the Arroyo administration that may be drafted in the ruling coalition's senatorial slate.

"I have yet to reach the point when I have to decide on running for the Senate. I think it is not yet time for that decision. Right now, I believe it will best serve the public if I stay on (as environment secretary)," Reyes said.

Reyes said the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission will rehabilitate not only the Pasig's waterway but also the environment on its banks. The project, backed by Asian Development Bank loans, will also encompass the Laguna Lake and the Manila Bay as part of a single eco-system and rehabilitation effort.

Reyes said sustainable Pasig River rehabilitation also entails construction of "interceptors for drainage and sewerage waste," on top of the usual dredging, and bioremediation of the water's toxic wastes.

"Wastes should be treated before they are released into the river," Reyes said.

Reyes said the DENR will also deal with the problem of hospital waste disposal by accrediting capable waste transporters and treaters.

"We will work in close coordination with the Department of Health in monitoring how hospitals dispose their wastes," Reyes said.

IMPORTANT

To the Devotees of the SACRED HEART OF JESUS. Tomorrow, January 05, 2007 is the FIRST FRIDAY of the month. NOVENAS and STATUES to the SACRED HEART OF JESUS and to ST. ANTHONY are given away FREE for Chapels, Hospitals, Schools, etc. Please get them from JASMINE at the Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City or from Beny at 170 Salcedo St. Legaspi Village, Makati City.

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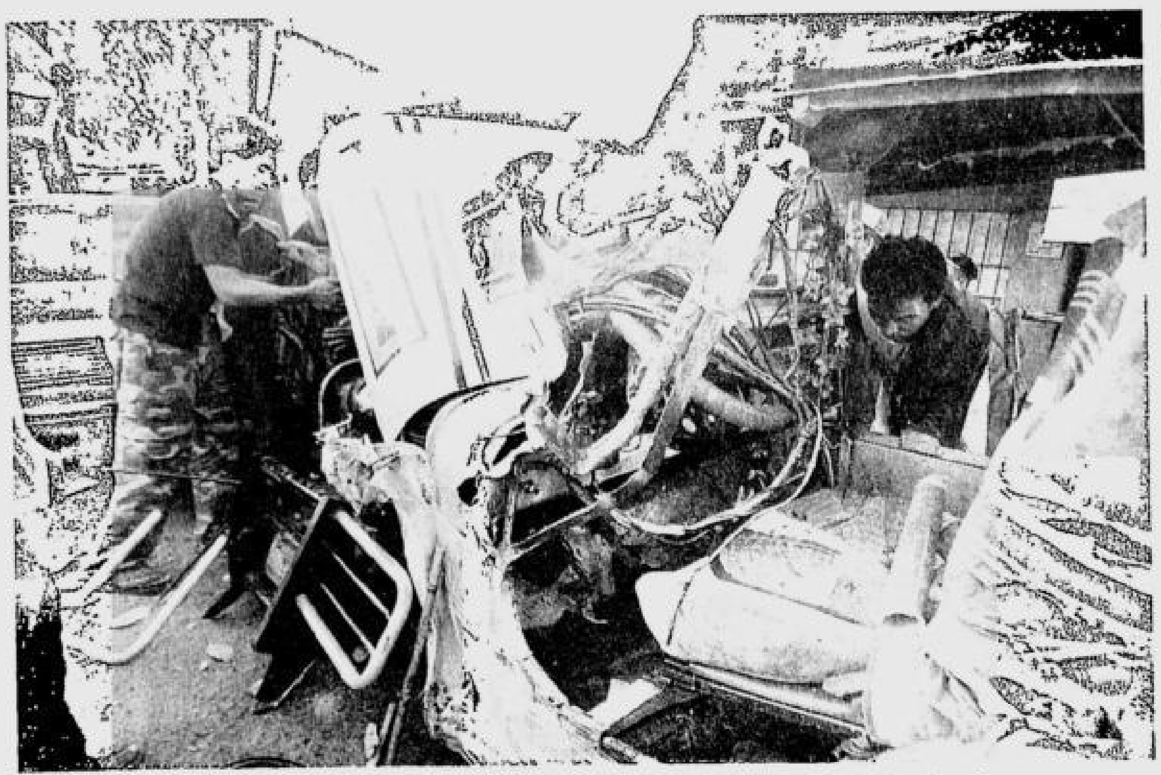
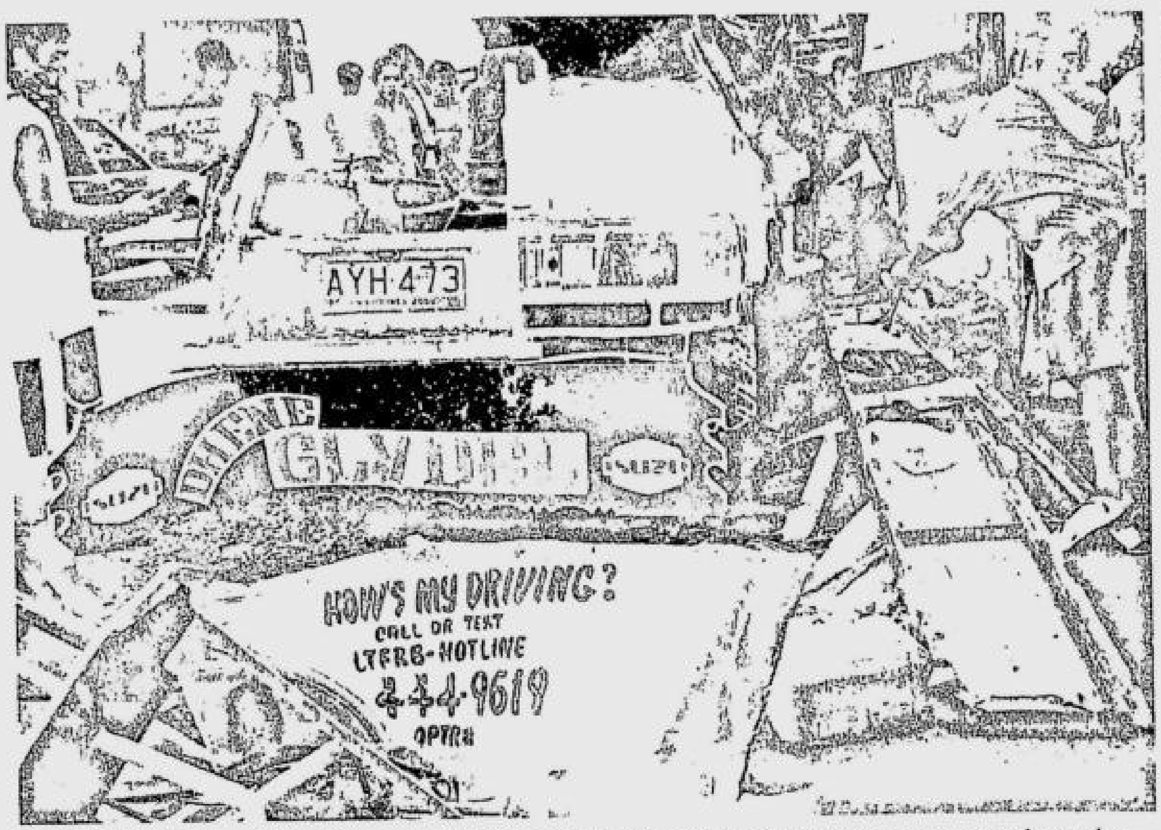
on the occasion
of his birthday
on January 2, 2007.

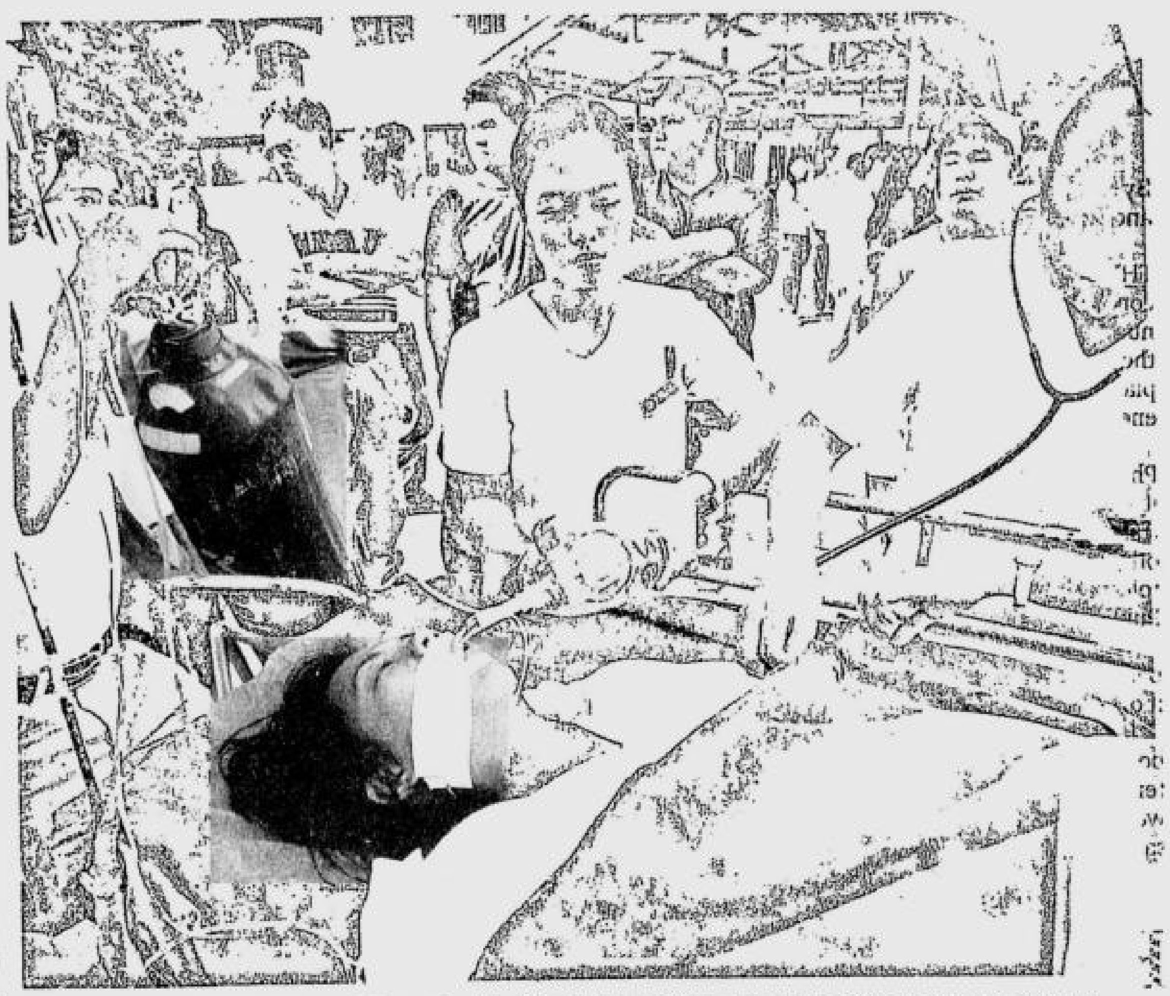


HARDLY ANY REMAINS TO BE SEEN of the jeepney except for twisted metal, blood and tears.



THE ANSWER: Nine of the 24 passengers died here. The jeepney loaded to teenage merrymakers who were on their way home to La Trinidad, Benguet, after a night at the beach in Bauang, La Union, when it collided with a trailer truck.

PHOTOS BY TOOTS SOBERANO/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON



A CRITICALLY INJURED Hazel Antonio, 18, of Beckel, La Trinidad, is rushed for emergency surgery. She's one of 15 seriously injured.

9 teeners killed, 15 injured in road crash

From page A1

sort in Bauang and were on their way home to La Trinidad, Benguet.

Police said the jeepney was overloaded with 24 passengers, but they could not confirm an Associated Press report that some of them were sitting on the roof.

The jeepney was negotiating a curve along the highway in Barangay Central East in Bauang at 4 a.m. when it was hit by an oncoming Isuzu trailer truck, police said.

Police identified the fatalities as driver Alex William Jr., Jessica Manino, Roby Jean Javier, Arlene Sapitual, Ricky Toma, all 18; Jany Boy Dudun, 14; Reggie Antonio, 16; Lea Bastian, 17; Reynaldo Anuran, 19, all of Barangay Beckel, La Trinidad.

The truck driver, Placido Valencia, 27, of Sta. Cruz, Manila, surrendered to police. The truck is owned by Rolando de la Cruz of Angat, Bulacan.

Those injured were taken to the Ilocos Region Medical Center in San Fernando City in La Union.

Supt. Pedro Ubaldo, Bauang police chief, said that because of the impact, the roof, front beam and wheels of the jeepney were detached, while the left side of the truck was damaged.

If you want to live long, stay in school

From page A1

But what, he asks, is cause and what is effect? And how can they be disentangled?

The answers, he and others say, have been a surprise.

The one social factor that researchers agree is consistently linked to longer lives in every country where it has been studied is education. It is more important than race; it obliterates any effects of income.

Year after year, in study after study, says Richard Hodes, director of the National Institute on Aging, education "keeps coming up."

And, health economists say, those factors that are popularly believed to be crucial—money and health insurance, for example—pale in comparison.

Biggest difference

Smith and others say that what may make the biggest difference is keeping young people in school. A few extra years of school is associated with extra years of life and vastly improve health decades later in old age.

A few years ago, economist Adriana Lleras-Muney read a paper indicating that about 100 years ago, different American states started passing laws forcing children to go to school for longer periods of time. She knew what to do.

"The idea was, when a state changed compulsory schooling from, say, six years to seven years, would the people who were forced to go to school for six years live as long as the people the next year who had to go for seven years?" Lleras-Muney asked.

When her analysis was finished, Lleras-Muney says, it turned out that life expectancy at age 35 was extended by as much as one and a half years simply by going to school for one extra year.

Now, other papers have appeared, examining the effects of changed laws on compulsory education in Sweden, Denmark, England and Wales.

In every country, compelling children to spend a longer time in school led to better health. *New York Times News Service*

Graying Japan opens door to first RP nurses

From page A1

nichiro Koizumi and President Macapagal-Arroyo signed a deal last September for Japan to accept up to 1,000 care workers and nurses from the Philippines within a two-year period.

The deal is more due to pressure from the Philippines—whose economy relies on remittances from the one-tenth of its population working overseas—than any desire by Japan.

Immigration policy

Any changes to immigration policy, like elsewhere in the developed world, are controversial in Japan. Especially so, as Asia's largest economy has strict regulations on foreign workers.

Under the agreement, the care workers are required to learn Japanese and to pass Japanese certification examinations, even if they have been deemed legally qualified in the Philippines.

So every day, Falqueza and Pineda attend four hours of Japanese classes in the morning and then "literally rush to catch a rapid train to the care support facility," which is located some two and a half hours away, Falqueza says.

They work four hours there, and when they go home it is already 9:30 p.m.

Working visas

Two years from now, they hope to get Japanese certification and reenter with working visas.

"Our colleagues are nice and our elderly customers are kind, often teaching us Japanese customs," says Pineda. "I want to keep working as a caregiver in Japan."

Shortage of workers

Falqueza nods, adding: "I'd like to have a stable job here, have savings, and enjoy being young."

THE NURTURING FILIPINO nurse is exemplified by Olivia Pineda who patiently listens to the needs of her elderly patients on top of flashing that winning smile. The patients complimented the Filipino nurses for making their home brighter. AFP

Officials say the care support industry faces a daunting shortage of workers in Japan, whose population began to shrink in 2005.

"Every facility is desperate to secure workers, because many workers, especially ones of good quality, are quick to leave due to tough working conditions involving night duties," says Hiromichi Mizuno, the president of a care home in the western city of Osaka.

The average annual salary for caregivers at public facilities funded through the insurance system is 2.2 million yen (US$18,800), well below the 3.8 million yen average for salaried workers, according to a government survey.

"Because the economy is recovering, we can't even compete with McDonald's in recruiting new workers," Mizuno says.

Solving the chronic shortage of workers boils down either to raising taxes—which would require more public insurance money—and accepting foreigners who are willing to work for less, according to managers of care facilities.

Japan's welfare costs are already snowballing due to its aging society.

Positive side

So far, managers who have hired Filipino trainees see only the positive side.

"Because they are hard-working and have warm personalities, they are accepted by colleagues and by customers," says Keiichi Kaneko of ZECS Community, a listed company which has accepted Filipino trainees for care support facilities.

Makoto Nanba, president of the Nanohana home where Falqueza and Pineda work, say the only major challenge he sees is the language barrier.

"If they can write and communicate more freely with colleagues and people in the facility, I don't mind hiring them," he says.

The tough requirement for Filipino caregivers—and the comparatively small number who will be allowed to work here—is seen by some as a deliberate attempt to avoid a political backlash.

"I think the conditions imposed reflect the Japanese government's intentions to limit the number of caregivers coming to Japan to a significantly low level," says Nanba.

"But I think it's also true that foreign labor could provide downward pressure on salaries for care workers," he adds, reflecting concerns that wages could lower even further.

Japan currently admits only foreign workers who are highly qualified in specific fields, such as computers.

More deals seen

Japan is also currently talking with Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam on similar free trade deals that could involve loosening conditions for working visas here.

"As the care industry always craves workers, I expect immigration laws to be changed in the near future to allow more in," says Masahiro Hachiya of the nongovernment International Care Aid Organization, which supports Falqueza and Pineda financially and in their everyday lives.

"I think the essence of the issue is comprehensive support for immigrants in terms of finding flats, teaching Japanese social and business customs, and most importantly, overcoming cultural differences including religion," Hachiya says. *AFP*

AFP welcomes resumption of war games

By Dona Pazzibugan and Christine O. Avendaño

THE ARMED FORCES WELcomed the resumption of the annual joint military exercises with the United States while downplaying the impact of their threatened cancelation.

"The Armed Forces of the Philippines can stand on its own, it can operate even without the training with the Americans or other countries," said Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro, chief of the AFP Public Information Office.

"We have an edge if we have better equipment, but we can do it on our own," he stressed.

But "anything that would boost capability in all aspects in terms of training and support, would be welcomed," Bacarro said.

The Balikatan exercises focus on weapons training and interoperability exercises, with some "humanitarian" projects done on the sidelines.

The US has also donated some of the sophisticated equipment used in the training, including M16 rifles, night vision goggles and handheld radios that operate on encrypted signals that cannot be intercepted by their enemies, Bacarro said.

US officials announced the other day that they were resuming the Balikatan February exercises after the Executive Branch, invoking the country's treaty commitments with the US, transferred convicted soldier Lance Cpl Daniel Smith from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy.

Washington canceled the exercises last Dec. 22 to protest what it said was a violation of the 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement which covers the conduct and treatment of US troops participating in joint war exercises here.

On Dec. 4, Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon found Smith guilty of raping a Filipina in Subic in 2005 and sent him to serve a life sentence in a Makati jail.

Malacañang yesterday said it did not strike any deal with US officials when it effected the transfer of Smith to US custody.

RP's commitment

"Although we recognize the value of the joint exercises for our troops, the Balikatan was never considered in our discussions on how best to implement the provisions of the [Visiting Forces Agreement] on the custody of convicted US servicemen," said Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno.

He said that among the reasons cited by Washington for canceling the exercises was because of uncertainty over the Philippines' commitment to comply with the provisions of the VFA, which could imperil the safety of US military personnel participating in the war games.

Puno stressed in a television interview that the government, in agreeing to Smith's handover to US Embassy custody, was merely implementing the provisions of the VFA which he said provided that the US retained custody of US servicement facing charges until court decisions become final and executory.

"The overriding concern was how we could honor and enforce our commitments under an international agreement such as the VFA while at the same time respecting the decision of an RTC [regional trial court] on an American soldier convicted of rape," he said.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita welcomed the US announcment of the Balikatan's resumption.

He said the US decided to resume the war games "because they know that we stood by our ground in the interpretations on the provisions of the [VFA] agreement," he said.

Ermita said that the Armed Forces improve its fighting capability and both Manila and Washington would benefit from the exchange of expertise on military and technical knowhow and exchange of intelligence, among others.

Review of VFA

He reiterated that both countries would need to review the VFA following the Smith custody case.

He said the foreign affairs department and other Cabinet members were going to take a second look at the VFA soon.

With the resumption of the war exercises, US authorities are expected to strictly enforce the code of conduct and guidelines they issued last year after the Smith incident.

"US authorities will issue a strict code of conduct for participants of Balikatan to limit themselves to strictly what they are called for under this program," foreign affairs undersecretary Rafael Seguis told reporters.

Seguis said this was to prevent "any incident of misbehavior."

Aside from the general order governing US forces in military exercises abroad, the US has also drawn up special instructions for its personnel while they are in the Philippines for the Balikatan.

The guidelines specify that US military personnel participating in the exercises would not be allowed shore leave and would be expected to return to their vessels after their exercises.

"It will be difficult and very remote that another rape incident will happen," Seguis said.

Retirement of No. 3 to trigger PNP reshuffle

By Alcuin Papa

THE RETIREMENT OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONal Police's third highest officer has set off a reshuffle in the leadership of the 118,000-strong force.

Deputy Director General Isidro Lapena, the PNP's Deputy Chief for Operations (DCO), who retired on Tuesday, was replaced by Deputy Director General Antonio Billones, according to a statement issued yesterday by PNP Deputy Chief for Administration Deputy Director General Avelino Razon

Billones' former post as Chief of the Directorial Staff, the PNP's fourth highest position, was filled by Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) chief Director Jesus Verzosa, who was credited with the capture of fugitive former Sen. Gregorio Honasan in November.

Director Edgardo Doromal, former chief of the Directorate for Investigation and Detection Management (DIDM), took over the CIDG.

Taking over Doromal's post is Chief Supt. Geary Barias, former chief of PNP regional command in Region 6.

Replacing Barias is Chief Supt. Wilfredo Dulay, formerly chief of the PNP's Chief Legal Service.

Dulay's deputy, Sr. Supt. Mario Sandiego, is now the chief of the PNP's Legal Service.

Aside from Lapena, other ranking police officials who are set to retire this year are Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela (Feb. 26); Chief Supt. Augusto Angcanan, PNP Civil Security Group chief (March 18); Director Alejandro Lapinid, PNP Director for Intelligence (May 18); Chief Supt. Nicasio Pasinos, PNP director for personnel and records management (July 22); Chief Supt. Noe Wong, PNP Comptroller (Aug. 11); and Chief Supt. Raul Gonzales, PNP CAR chief (Aug. 17).

By law, any more movements in government positions, including positions in the PNP, will be disallowed from Jan. 14 to July 13 due to the May elections.

First Pacific to use up 30 days to buy PLDT stocks

By Daxim L. Lucas

FIRST PACIFIC IS LIKELY TO EXHAUST THE entire 30-day period it is given to decide whether to increase its stake in the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. by buying shares in a company that has a small stake in the country's largest telecommunications company.

The strategy is meant, in part, to let the furor over the sale of the government's shares in the Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. die down first, while giving more time to PLDT chair Manuel V. Pangilinan to raise the money needed for the transaction, according to a senior government official familiar with the deal.

The official, who asked not to be named, said the Hong Kong-based First Pacific was also trying to convince its partner, NTT DoCoMo of Japan, which apparently had been turned off by the controversy generated by the partners' planned purchase of the PTIC shares for an allegedly "underpriced" P25.2 billion.

Full acceptance

"I was told that [First Pacific] needs the full acceptance of NTT. They need this conforme before the deal can proceed," the official said.

NTT DoCoMo, a minority shareholder in PLDT, and First Pacific announced plans to acquire control over an additional six percent of PLDT stock indirectly via a 14-percent stake in PTIC, which the government is in the process of privatizing.

The public bidding was won by the Singapore-based Parallax Capital Management which offered a bid of P25.2 billion, which First Pacific can top by simply matching by virtue of its so-called "right of first refusal" as a shareholder in PLDT.

Under the plan initially laid out with the finance department, the First Pacific-NTT DoCoMo tandem would have shelled out 50 percent of the P25.2 billion purchase price for the PTIC shares with the signing of the tripartite sale agreement last Friday.

But the First Pacific group then sent word that it would only be able to pay P1.5 billion before the end of 2006, partly because the controversy had spooked its Japanese partners. This plan also fell through.

Meanwhile, Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves has expressed confidence that the deal would not be derailed by persistent rumors that Parallax was also acting on behalf of the owners of First Pacific, the Salim family of Indonesia.

"We don't have any prohibition and or restrictions on this. What's relevant to us is the financial capacity of either First Pacific or Parallax," he said in a phone interview.

The finance chief acknowledged, however, that delays in getting NTT DoCoMo on board the deal was one of the reasons for its delay.

"I suppose they're still trying to convince DoCoMo," he said.

"If the Japanese are backing out, Mr. Pangilinan should let us know," he said.

In a separate interview, Finance Undersecretary John Sevilla said he saw no need to tighten bidding rules amid criticism of the transaction.

"I wouldn't care who buys it, even if they're related, as long as we get paid. But we can debate on whether the discount was appropriate because I think that's a proper debate," he said.

Camarines Sur Rep. Arnulfo Fuentebella last month set off a controversy when he came out against the sale of the PTIC shares, which he said was scandalous, irregular and disadvantageous to the government.

He said the government stood to lose between P8 billion and P10 billion from the deal, considering that the share price of PLDT at the time was P2,500 per share.

It could not be ascertained what the price of PTIC shares was during the same period.

Ice show brings Fil-Am pro skater back to RP

By Nikko Dizon

RAMOS

THIS 20-YEAR-OLD FILipino-American ice skater wants to be a nurse.

But first, Dianna Ramos will perform for her "*kababayans*" in Manila as part of the ice-skating show "Melanj on Ice."

Some 30 ice skaters of various nationalities will be performing in the show, described by its promoter, Backroom Inc., in a statement as "a feast to the eyes with breathless death-defying stunts, jumps, and spins only brilliant skaters do."

Ramos is the only Fil-Am skater in the group and Melanj gave her the opportunity to perform for the first time in the Philippines.

"I'm really excited," Ramos told reporters upon arriving at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) yesterday morning, together with four other skaters.

Born in the US, the petite Ramos said the last time she visited Manila was when she was five years old.

Three years later, she began taking up the sport that would eventually bring her back to her parents' native country.

Her mother Elna is a nurse from Cebu while her father, Danilo, is a radiologist.

Falling in love with figure skating, she has made it her career. She even joined various competitions along the way.

"I just feel free when I'm out there," Ramos said of ice skating.

Yes, she can spin "very fast" on ice.

It was when she did a show in Atlantic City that she had the chance to know about the Melanj show and auditioned for it.

Ramos encouraged all Filipino ice-skaters to do their best in the sport that requires a lot of hard work, dedication and determination.

"Melanj on Ice" will run from Jan. 25 to Feb. 11 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium. The show is for the benefit of Team Philippines, Backroom Inc. said.

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PREMYO SA RESIBO
PAGCOR
Congratulations to the Premyo Sa Resibo Grand Christmas Draw Winners!

Finance Secretary Gary Teves(center) awards the P1 Million and P100,000 checks to 18 of 30 winners of the PSR December 20, 2006 Grand Christmas Draw, at the ceremonies held at the Department of Finance yesterday January 3, 2007. The lucky P1 Million winners, all holding big checks (1st row, from left) were Ms. Jaysay Bactad from Bicutan, Ms. Hazel Magnaye Quiroz from Lipa City, Dra. Michelle Manuel from Quezon City, Ms Zenaida Carit from del Monte Bulacan, Ms Arsenia Pabustan from Pampanga, (2nd row from left) Mr Renato Cagay from Bohol and Ms Rosario Tutay from San Juan Manila. Assisting in the awarding ceremonies are Ms. Lilia Gurllermo, BIR Deputy Commissioner, Mr July Pena, PAGCOR representative and Mr Dennis Valdes, President of Philweb.

P100, 000 consolation prize winners were Anafe Macalalad from Calaca Batangas, Rommel Sampang from Concepcion Tarlac, Carlos Zafra Jr. from Manadaluyong City, Alma Murphy from Angeles City, Normando Guce from Quezon City, Tomas Oriondo from Pasay City, Marietta Regua from Pasig City, Corazon Sagdullas From Caloocan City, Conrado Derequito from San Pablo City, Eda Hermosa from Antipolo City and Hernando Catando from Caloocan City.

The next **Premyo Sa Resibo** draw will be on **January 19, 2007**, where P1 million **prize** is at stake **weekly**. For this draw, Official Receipts from **Dec. 1, 2006 to Jan. 18, 2007** are qualified.

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INVESTORS observe from the gallery of the Philippine Stock Exchange Wednesday to monitor the bourse's transaction. AFP

Stocks surge to near 10-year high; peso continues to gain

From page A1

market," PSE president Francis Lim said.

Lim said the market's performance yesterday reflected sustained investor confidence in the country's economic prospects, which are perceived to have significantly improved as a result of reforms.

ATR Kim Eng securities chair Lorenzo Roxas said the index was poised to hit 3,600 within the year, boosted by foreign inflows and other catalysts—lower inflation, lower interest rates, and the growth in remittances from overseas foreign workers—that propelled the market to new highs last year.

Roxas also said that buying was evident among power-related stocks, telecommunication firms as the government prepares to auction off huge power assets this year.

Leading the most actively traded stocks was PNOC Energy Development Corp. although it succumbed to selling toward the close, ending down 5 centavos to P4.75 from P4.80 previously.

Telecom giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) rose P30 or 1.2 percent to P2,580 while Globe Telecom Inc. shot up P40 or 3.2 percent to P1,280 a share.

Meralco shares

Class B shares of Manila Electric Co., or those traded by Filipinos and foreign investors alike, rose 4.5 percent to P57.50 while class A shares, or those only for Filipinos rose, 4.6 percent to P56.50.

Meralco's share prices were boosted after the Supreme Court allowed the power distributor to raise rates in Metro Manila and nearby areas, upholding an earlier order by the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

The Supreme Court affirmed last month the ERC's March 20, 2003 decision, and May 30, 2003 order, allowing Meralco to increase its rates by 1.68 centavos per kilowatthour.

Peso powers stocks surge

Analysts said the strengthening of the peso against the US dollar was also fueling the rally in the stock market.

"We think that this year, with improving government revenues and a slowdown in the US economy, which will render the dollar weaker, the peso may hit P47," said Astro del Castillo, managing director of First Grade Holdings.

Reevie Vergara, treasurer of Land Bank of the Philippines, said the strengthening of the peso was mainly due to strong economic fundamentals and remittances from OFWs and hot money inflows.

Foreign-managed funds

Vergara noted that trading at the PSE was brisk because of foreign-managed funds snapping up local equities.

"Add to that, the Filipino professionals now still based abroad but with plans in the near future to retire here are coming in with purchases and investments in locally based real estate and other assets," he said.

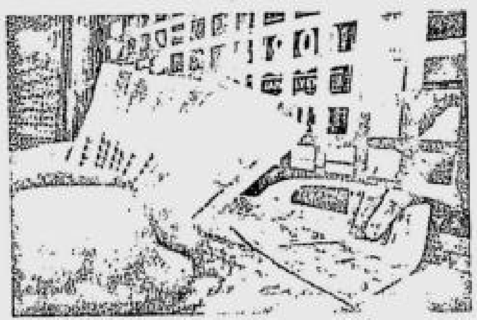
Vergara said the market would likely test the 48.80 barrier in the next few days.

"One major factor to consider is the export sector, which suffers with every downward fluctuation of the dollar," Vergara said.

Exports

For 2006, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas expects export earnings to grow faster than the 12-percent minimum expansion targeted by the government despite the dampening impact of a sharply appreciating peso.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said that based on the country's actual trade performance for the first 10 months, export receipts could surge by 15 to 16 percent for the whole year despite seasonal volatility in the last quarter.



A CUSTOMER counts her pesos after changing her US dollars at a moneychanger in Manila Wednesday. AFP

He said receipts would usually be robust in October and November then suddenly falter in December because by then, merchandisers around the world would have piled up enough for their holiday inventories.

Based on the country's import spending pattern, Guinigundo said the strong local demand for raw materials and capital goods in the previous months also hinted at a strong export performance in the last quarter of 2006.

The country's top dollar earners are electronics products, which account for two-thirds of export earnings but they also have a high import content.

Included in this sector are those selling semiconductors, office equipment, telecommunication and medical/industrial instrumentation.

Budget deadlock

Analysts said the deadlock in the national budget could dampen the economy's exuberance.

Congress has failed to pass the proposed national budget of P1.126 trillion for 2007 because of Senate objections to the P4.4-billion allocation for the food-for-school program.

The Senate believes that the amount is part of the administration's election war chest.

Since Monday, the government has been operating on the 2005 budget of P907.56 billion, the same amount adopted for 2006 because Congress had failed to pass the budget for last year.

"If the budget is not approved, the central bank will not likely lower interest rates because of too much money in the system," ATR Kim Eng economist Luz Lorenzo said.

"If the money is just out there, without going to infrastructure and basic services, then that is inflationary," Lorenzo said.

Companies tend to cheer lower interest rates because this allows them to borrow more funds for expansion.

With a report from AP

CA: Custody issue moot b

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ROAD RAGE: Protesters display their sentiments on placards as they atte way closer to the US Embassy the better for its occupants to hear their de Smith to the Makati jail.

From page A1

Associate Justice Apolinario Bruselas Jr., the court's special 16th division said it had to defer to the wisdom of US Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes who said that the courts were better off not intervening in diplomatic issues.

It said that despite its disagreement with the position of the Philippine government's executive branch and the US Embassy on the custody dispute, it had to leave it to the government to "do as it sees fit and deal with such latest agreement as its sound judgment permits; for as Justice Holmes once wisely observed, 'the other branches of government are ultimate guardians of the liberties and welfare of the people in quite as great degree as the courts.'"

The "latest agreement" referred to was that signed by Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney last Dec. 22 stating that Smith should be held at the US Embassy compound, in keeping with the provisions of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement.

Sigh of relief

This part of the ruling elated officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and moved Foreign Undersecretary for Special Concerns Rafael Seguis to read it aloud at a briefing.

"My reaction is a sigh of relief, that we are after all vindicated. Our action was vindicated by the [court's] decision," Seguis said.

The ruling—in which Associate Justices Josefina Guevara-Salonga (division chair) and Fernanda Lampas-Peralta concurred—further pointed out that "courts may not directly intervene in the exercise of diplomacy no matter how proudly or meekly, strongly or weakly, such exercise may be conducted by the appropriate political organ of the government."

It added: "Courts may only say what the facts are and what the law may be in a given case or controversy and rule accordingly. That is what the respondent judge (Pozon) did, and that is what [the appellate court] can also only do; nothing more and nothing less."

Seguis quoted this passage when asked how the DFA could claim vindication when the appellate court upheld Pozon's interpretation of the VFA provisions regarding the custody of Smith.

DFA spokesperson Ed Malaya said the cited jurisprudence derived from Holmes was not even among the arguments presented by the Office of the Solicitor General, which served as the DFA's counsel, in pleadings filed in support of Smith's transfer of custody.

Moving on

"This question of custody having been resolved, we are happy that [RP-US] relations can move on," Seguis said.

He said the resolution had "forestalled the further erosion of our relationship with the US, the indication of which is the Balikatan being resumed soon."

"We have a lot to lose in benefits derived from Balikatan," Seguis added.

US military authorities had earlier canceled this year's RP-US war games as a result of Smith's continuing detention at the Makati City Jail. On Tuesday, DFA and US Embassy officials said Balikatan 2007 would proceed.

Asked what were the DFA's other apprehensions had the "strained relations" between the two countries taken a turn for the worse, Sequis conceded that economic repercussions were among them.

"The US is still our No. 1 trading partner," he said. "I'm not saying that the effects will be felt immediately. In the long term we will all suffer."

Reached on the phone, US Embassy spokesperson Matthew Lussenhop said he could not make a point-by-point reaction to the appellate court's ruling.

All he would say was that "the case still remains within Philippine jurisdiction and custody with the US, which is called for by the VFA."

The appellate court said the custody issue could still be resolved by a new agreement between the Philippine and US governments.

"As the weakest among the ultimate guardians of the liberties and welfare of the people, we can only soberly articulate that custody and jurisdiction are essential to sovereignty," it said.

The appellate court said allowing Smith to stay in US custody after the proceedings in Pozon's court could leave Philippine justice empty-handed.

"His remaining in US custody will keep him beyond the jurisdiction of Philippine authorities, who have exclusive jurisdiction over him with respect to the offense that he has committed," it said, adding:

"It may as well be stated that it is not the physical layout of the agreed-on confinement or detention facility, or the stringency of security,

Both Smith, Nicole camps claim vic

MOUNTED ANTITERRORIST forc after Smith was transferred there a

From page A1

court] could have legitimized the decision of the executive branch, but it did not. In the end, what [it is] protecting is the rule of law."

But Smith's lawyer Jose Justiniano viewed the ruling as favorable to his client:

"Let's say we lost in our position [about the merits], but we have already achieved the result. After all, we expected that [the petition] will be denied because what we wanted is already done and it's already moot and academic.

"The relief we asked for in the petition has in effect been granted through the act of the executive branch ... Hence, [Smith's transfer to the US Embassy] is de facto legal."

Additional ammunition

Ursua saw further use of the court ruling and said it could be cited as a basis for seeking Smith's arrest.

"We can use it as additional ground for all [pleadings] we will file. We can use it as additional basis in [opposing] Smith's appeal and asking that his conviction be declared final and executory and that an arrest warrant be issued against him," she said.

Justiniano admitted that had Smith not been removed from the Makati City Jail and transferred to the US Embassy shortly before midnight last Dec. 29, "he would have stayed there and we would have brought our appeal to the Supreme Court, because it is the final arbiter."

"The executive agreement [between Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney] saved the day for us," Justiniano said.

The lawyer said Smith's legal team did not know about his transfer until moments before the soldier hopped into a vehicle and was driven to the US Embassy late Friday night—an operation initiated by the Department of Interior and Local Government.

"There was really no coordination with me," said Justiniano, who was out of the country at the time of the transfer.

World's watching

On Tuesday, President Macapagal-Arroyo said she had made the "difficult decision" to return Smith to US custody "with only the best interest of the Philippines in mind" and to prevent the "further deterioration" of RP-US ties.

Yesterday at his weekly briefing, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters that the world was watching the Philippines' action on the custody dispute involving Smith.

He said that had the executive branch not acted the way it did, other countries would hesitate in forging agreements with the Philippines.

"I think we have been vindicated because within 48 hours, the Americans made the announcement that we will resume the Balikatan exercises," Ermita said.

Commenting on the appellate court's ruling, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said Smith's petition was dismissed because the soldier was now back in US custody.

"I think the court simply took judicial cognizance of the fact of the transfer. If you read a portion of the decision, [you'll see that] it acknowledges the manner by which the executive [branch] interpreted the VFA provision on custody. The *ponente* (Associate Justice Apolinario Bruselas Jr.) seems to disagree, but all three justices concurred in the result of the decision," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez also said Nicole's camp could still appeal the ruling before the Supreme Court.

He dismissed as "a figment of imagination" the apprehension raised by some quarters that the controversy over the custody issue would lead to a constitutional crisis.

Nothing negative

Even Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said the court ruling recognized the executive action that laid the legal basis for Smith's controversial transfer to the US Embassy.

"There was nothing negative in what the court said regarding the executive action," Puno told the INQUIRER.

"We believe it upheld the executive action," he said.

It was Puno who decided, upon receipt of a copy of the Romulo-Kenney agreement and a Department of Justice opinion that the move was legal, to transfer Smith to US custody.

"I hope [the public will understand the Arroyo administration better in light of the court decision], but people have already made up their minds on the transfer," he said, adding:

"In our minds, we just implemented the court decisions in accordance with the [provisions of the VFA]."

Puno also said the cancellation of Balikatan 2007 was never a factor when the National Security Council made a decision to comply with the Philippines' VFA obligations and find a way to legally move Smith to US custody. *(See related story on Page A7.)*

"While acknowledging the value of the Balikatan exercises, the overriding concern in the Dec. 29 move to return Smith to US custody was to enforce the Philippines' obligations under international law and the decision of the Makati Regional Trial Court on his detention facility, as agreed upon by the Philippine and US governments," Puno said.

Renegotiate VFA

Some senators weighed in on the appellate court's ruling.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said Malacañang and the US Embassy should return Smith to Philippine custody out of respect for the court, and Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said this would avert a constitutional crisis.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said there was a need to renegotiate the VFA if only to clarify certain "ambiguous" terms, such as "the completion of judicial proceedings."

Gonzalez: Smith transfer better than pa

From page A1

guidance from the secretary of justice and our own lawyers and in the end, the decision was the correct thing to do. It reinforces the efficacy of the government as one that complies with its international commitments and agreements," Puno said.

Well thought-out

Puno said his group took into consideration the public's reaction. "It's important to listen to public opinion but in the end you have to do the right thing," he said.

Gonzalez said the decision to transfer Smith was "well thought-out."

"The reaction is emotional and being encouraged by the opposition. You have to bite the bullet sometimes. I was listening to Boy Abunda [who said] that sometimes you have to make difficult decisions," the justice secretary said.

Abunda is a talk show host and owns the Backroom Inc., a company that manages show business talents.

Gonzalez said the Philippines was recognized as a country that knows how to fulfill its commitments. "With the swiftness of communication today, anything that happens in one corner of the globe is already [reported] all over the world," he said.

Immoral

The Arroyo administration may have all the legal arguments to back its decision to turn over a convicted rapist to American authorities, but it's not exactly free from its moral obligations, according to a senior member of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

"The laws of the land, especially on the matter of criminal justice, are premised on natural law," Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz told the INQUIRER.

"Violating such laws of the land, which are just, cannot but be immoral," he said.

Cruz, a former CBCP president, said it was understandable for t authorities to do everything to keep Smith from Philippine jai despite being convicted of rapi "Nicole," a young Filipino woman

But what the archbishop fou perplexing was the Philippine go ernment's efforts that seeming favored Smith.

Cruz cited the petition filed the government that sought t transfer of Smith from the Mak City Jail to the US Embassy.

Unstable tenure

"The morality of the Philippi government's attitude in this gard is quite questionable," said.

Cruz said Malacañang's decis

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nand to return
BULLIT MARQUEZ/AP

A GENTLE RAIN does not douse the heated slogans thrown by militant groups at the Department of Justice protesting Smith's release from the Makati jail. The DOJ has been one of the staunch defenders of the government move to spring Smith. REM ZAMORA

but the simple fact that it be run by Philippine authorities that makes any such agreement fully compliant with the VFA and with our national law."

The court also said there had been no grave abuse of discretion on the part of Pozon in convicting Smith of rape and committing him to the Makati City Jail.

"In the case now before us, we note that [Pozon] heard the petitioner on his proposition [that he be returned to US custody]. He also heard the prosecution on the issue of custody. It was only after hearing them that [Pozon] maintained his original order of commitment," the court said.

The court pointed out that under criminal law and procedure, a judgment of conviction imposing the penalty of imprisonment above six years would be immediately followed by an order of commitment to the appropriate detention facility.

"Given [Pozon's] foregoing behavior, we cannot say easily that the issuance of the questioned orders had been attended by whim, caprice or arbitrariness," it said.

In the descriptive sense

Also according to the court, the VFA provision allowing the US Embassy to keep custody of Smith in all judicial proceedings covers only proceedings before the lower court, and not the appeals process.

"The term 'all judicial proceedings' ... refers to all trial court proceedings. The term is used in its descriptive sense, not in its all-embracing sense," the court said.

It added that Smith may not remain further under US custody after completion of all trial proceedings because there was no longer any further obligation to hold and produce him for any other investigative or trial court proceedings.

The appellate court also threw out the notion that the VFA was meant to "shield" visiting US soldiers from harm.

"The soldier protects the people and needs no protection from the people. The visiting soldier is in reality a lethal weapon, not much different from men-of-war that make friendly port calls on other sovereign states," the court said.

ıory

ǝ outside the US Embassy indicates tighter security at the US Embassy
nd protest rallies now daily hound its environs. AFP

"Because of the [court] ruling, the United States and Malacañang should respect our justice system and our judiciary, and return Smith to Philippine custody. The court has spoken," Pangilinan said in a statement.

He said the President should take the lead in showing respect for the court's ruling.

"If she wants the rule of law to reign and keep the people's respect for the country's laws, the highest official of the land should lead by example. This is what we call leadership by example, and this starts from the top," he said.

Said Biazon, a member of the bicameral Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA (Lovfa): "I think the first and best option to follow in avoiding a constitutional crisis is for Malacañang to work toward returning Smith to the jurisdiction of the court, meaning confined at the Makati City Jail."

If Malacañang fails to "satisfactorily respond" to the court ruling, he added, "this could be headed toward a constitutional crisis."

Pyrrhic victory

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. called the court ruling "a classic case of Pyrrhic victory [for the administration] for the simple reason that it comes at the cost of national dignity and the sacrifice of the rule of law."

"The government's position is not improved by the ruling in any manner. It merely acknowledges the situation as it is. And there's no remedy except force to change it. And unfortunately, we're not in a position to resort to force against the only superpower in the world," Pimentel said in an interview.

"The only sop that the people can demand, as a recompense for the national shame, is to cite Puno for contempt and demand that Gloria resign," he said.

Like Puno, Sen. Alfredo Lim said the ruling vindicated Malacañang in Smith's clandestine transfer to the US Embassy. "Now that the Court of Appeals has spoken, all speculations must be put to rest and the people should no longer be agitated," he said.

Neither side won

But Lovfa chair Santiago said the ruling was a victory for neither side.

"I don't think the claims of vindication on the administration's part and victory for the opposing side are justified. The ruling is simply neutral," she said in an interview, pointing out that the appellate court could not rule on an event that had already taken place.

The senator, however, disagreed with the court's interpretation on the judicial proceedings as limited to the trial.

This, she said, was a direct contradiction of Black's law dictionary, which is the authority on the definition of legal terms.

"I'm afraid that the Philippine judicial interpretation will receive short shrift from international experts abroad. In effect, we might lose our credibility abroad because of our failure to adhere to internationally recognized norms," she said. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

ɾdoning him

might have been affected by President Macapagal-Arroyo's "unstable tenure" brought about by unresolved political controversies.

"One thing is certain—she knows that her tenure is quite unstable because of her loss of integrity and credibility," he said. "Because of this, she needs all the support from the US to hold on to the seat of power."

"In handing over Smith to the US Embassy, Ms Arroyo was torn between two colliding principles—respect for our treaty obligations and respect for judicial processes, according to an administration lawmaker.

Rep. Exequiel Javier, vice chair of House justice committee, noted that the Constitution vested in the President the power to enter into treaties and appoint ambassadors.

Bound by oath

Javier said Ms Arroyo was bound by her oath to execute provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement on custody, which form part of the law of the land, being a treaty.

Javier said the enforcement of treaties was the responsibility of any sitting President and was beyond question by the courts.

Rep. Rodito Albano of Isabela, former vice chair of the House committee on rules, said the transfer of custody was made by the government based on the "best interest of the nation."

Albano said the transfer was not tantamount to freedom for Smith because under the VFA he would serve his sentence in the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa should the lower court's verdict be affirmed.

House Deputy Majority Leader Antonio Cerilles said the government's decision on the transfer of Smith's custody was not kowtowing to the US wishes.

"We have so much to lose if we strain our relations with the United States because it is our strongest ally, biggest trading and security partner," he said.

Cerilles said the government was not belittling Nicole's welfare or right to justice, but it had to give weight to the VFA provisions and to the welfare of 85 million Filipinos.

Not so, said the opposition.

Unacceptable

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said Ms Arroyo's justification for turning over Smith, which is to save the country's ties with the United States, was "not acceptable."

"Nowhere in her oath of office did it say that she swore to save RP-US relations. On the contrary, she swore to faithfully execute the laws and give justice to her fellow men," said Escudero. *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra and Michael Lim Ubac*

16TH DIVISION, COURT OF APPEALS

ASSOCIATE JUSTICE JOSEFINA GUEVARA-SALONGA

She was executive judge at the Makati Regional Trial Court prior to her appointment as Court of Appeals Associate Justice in August 2000. She finished her bachelor of laws degree at University of the Philippines in 1966.

ASSOCIATE JUSTICE APOLINARIO BRUSELAS JR.

He was first vice executive judge at the Quezon City Regional Trial Court prior to his appointment as Associate Justice of Court of Appeals in 2005. He finished bachelor of laws at University of the Philippines in 1982.

ASSOCIATE JUSTICE FERNANDA LAMPAS-PERALTA

She was appointed to the Court of Appeals as Associate Justice in February 2004. She finished bachelor of laws at San Beda College in 1984. Also a certified public accountant.

IN THE KNOW

THE WEBSITE of the New York State Courts defines a moot case as "not necessary to be decided."

According to the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, "mootness usually refers to a court's refusal to consider a case because the issue involved has been resolved prior to the court's decision."

In a number of decisions (e.g. PAL v Pascua et al. and PNB v Court of Appeals and Barilea), the Philippine Supreme Court said a case was "moot and academic" when a decision on the issue would serve no practical use, or when there was no more controversy between the parties involved.

On May 10, 2001, the high court dismissed petitions questioning President Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration of a state of rebellion in the wake of the bloody Labor Day siege of Malacañang by supporters of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

The high court explained that the petitions were already moot and academic because the President lifted the declaration on May 6.

Princeton University's WordNet website defines "academic" as "hypothetical or theoretical and not expected to produce an immediate or practical result." *Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research*

Gov't should have control of Smith, says UE law dean

By Norman Bordadora

THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT should have control of and jurisdiction over the room where convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith is detained at the US Embassy compound in Manila.

This is the ideal situation if the Court of Appeals ruling on Smith's custody case will be fully complied with, according to Amado Valdez, dean of the University of the East College of Law.

"Of course, this will again be subject to negotiations," Valdez, a former commissioner of the Presidential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement, yesterday told the INQUIRER.

"There should be a quid pro quo arrangement. We gave them custody; they should give some concessions as well," he said.

Valdez pointed out that while the court declared the custody issue moot in view of the agreement between the Philippine and US governments that the soldier should be returned to US custody, it also said that the place of detention should be under Philippine control.

"The issue of custody being moot and academic should be subject to the preceding paragraph [of the ruling] that says the place of [Smith's detention] should be under the control of Philippine authorities," he said.

"The Philippine government should press for control of that physical space Smith is occupying inside the embassy," he added.

Valdez admitted that the arrangement would be subject to what the US Embassy would agree to.

"It all depends on their goodwill. It's their embassy. It's their house," he said.

CA ruling highlights: Custody inherent in RP jurisdiction

By Inquirer Research

- THE PETITION OF LANCE Cpl. Daniel Smith's lawyers to reverse Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Benjamin Pozon's decision to detain the US Marine at the Makati City Jail is moot as he was already moved into the US Embassy.
- Pozon did not commit grave abuse of authority, as claimed by Smith's lawyers, when he ordered Smith's detention at the Makati City Jail. It said Pozon's decision is in accordance "with municipal law and penal statutes and with the VFA, since there is yet no agreement about the confinement or detention facility."
- "[T]he present Visiting Forces Agreement does not provide for any waiver of jurisdiction. In fact, it expressly acknowledges jurisdiction in Philippine authorities in keeping with the territorial principle in international law ... and penal law.
- "The VFA is not about protecting soldiers from any harm. It is all about containing and restraining visiting soldiers from causing damage to the host country."
- Citing paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Article V of the VFA, the CA asserts that "there can be no quibbling that Philippine authorities exercise exclusive jurisdiction over the person of the petitioner and have primary right to exercise jurisdiction over the offense that he committed."
- The CA also adds that the "detention and custody of US personnel by Philippine authorities while facing prosecution are in fact explicitly recognized" in the provisions of paragraph 9. It also says that "inherent in jurisdiction is the component aspect of custody."
- The CA further cites paragraph 10 of the agreement in saying that the VFA "recognizes that the custodial facility to be determined and agreed on shall be one that is within the jurisdiction of Philippine authorities or in layman's language, a facility run and administered by Philippine authorities.
- Despite these arguments, however, the courts cannot intervene in diplomatic issues because "such exercise may be conducted by the appropriate political organ of government."
- The CA therefore gives weight to the latest RP-US agreement signed by the foreign secretary and the US ambassador to transfer Smith to the custody of the US Embassy based on the VFA between the two countries.

Duterte: Had I . . .

From page A1

Constitution and the Filipino people, Duterte also said yesterday.

Duterte, a lawyer, said the transfer was clearly the result of American bullying.

Earlier, Washington said it was suspending the conduct of military exercises with the Philippines this year because of the jailing of Smith in Makati.

The mayor, who acts as Malacañang consultant on public order and safety, said the smuggling out of Smith from the Makati City Jail could further fuel anti-American sentiments in the country.

Duterte is also President Arroyo's consultant on antiterrorism. He and North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol led Mindanao officials in December last year in advocating Charter change through a constituent assembly.

He left the ruling coalition of former President Joseph Estrada amid mounting calls for the president's resignation in 2000. In 2004, Duterte then declared his support for the presidential bid of President Arroyo.

"My position is that he should have remained in the custody of the Philippine government. Only after the Court of Appeals' ruling can Smith be transferred to the custody of whoever wants him," he told reporters here.

Wait for CA ruling

Duterte said those who worked hard for Smith's transfer should have waited for the Court of Appeal's decision.

Even with the existence of the Visiting Forces Agreement, the question of jurisdiction is not really difficult to resolve, according to Duterte.

He maintained that Smith should have not been moved out of the Makati jail while the American serviceman's conviction was on appeal.

The militant women's group Gabriela, for its part, said Smith's transfer was an act of treachery.

"Like thieves in the night, the Arroyo administration and its cohorts from the foreign affairs and justice department as well as the Filipino lawyers for Smith have again done this cunning move," Emmi de Jesus, Gabriela secretary general, said.

De Jesus said those who worked for Smith's transfer "have gone too far."

"Shame on these protectors of a criminal," she said.

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OPINION

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Dancing children

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS APPEALED to the Filipino people for understanding of her administration's "difficult decision" to transfer Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith from the Makati City Jail to the United States Embassy. The transfer to US custody of the US Marine convicted of raping a Filipina "will not impede justice and the rule of law," she said. "The government had to take this action in order to forestall the further deterioration in our strategic relationship with the United States, which was being rapidly eroded by our non-compliance with [the Visiting Forces Agreement]." She then asked the people to stand by her decision and "stand behind our alliance with the United States to fight terror and poverty."

She is asking too much. First, it is not very easy to understand how justice is served when an American convicted of a heinous offense is accorded rights and privileges not given to Filipinos caught in a similar fix. It is difficult to see how the rule of law was being upheld and respected when the administration set aside the order of the Makati Regional Trial Court that Smith be held at the city jail and moved him to the US Embassy even before the Court of Appeals could rule on the legality of the lower court's order. By moving Smith late at night, when no one was looking and everyone was busy preparing for the New Year celebrations, wasn't the administration admitting that the legality and correctness of its decision might melt away in the light of day and under public scrutiny?

Second, it is hard to understand why the administration was in a rush to save RP-US relations as they now stand. It is quite obvious that US officials do not place too much value on this relationship like Ms Arroyo and her Cabinet do. To the United States, that relationship is not even as important as ensuring the comfort and convenience of a single American. Not even if the American happens not to be exactly innocent and law-abiding, but one who has been found guilty of violating a Filipina and violating the law after a fair and open trial conducted by a Philippine court.

To keep Smith out of a Philippine jail, pending appeal of his conviction, the commander of the US Pacific Command, Adm. William Fallon, cancelled the annual RP-US joint war exercise known as Balikatan and ordered all aid and reconstruction programs being undertaken by US troops terminated. Not content with such a swift, unmistakable display of displeasure, Fallon also ordered the withdrawal of a team assessing the needs of typhoon-ravaged areas, exploding once and for all the myth of America's altruism and humanitarianism in the face of tragedy and suffering.

And it was not just Fallon who was doing the pressuring, if administration officials are to be believed. Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol, who had earlier recommended that the administration risk getting cited for contempt by the court instead of incurring the displeasure of America, has said the United States might have imposed an economic blockade, as in Cuba, had the Philippines insisted on keeping Smith under its custody. What is more likely is that such a threat happened only in Apostol's nightmares. But such hallucinations are emblematic of the fear of the White Father among administration officials.

Consider the speed with which Ms Arroyo and her officials adopted the US interpretation of the VFA. Note how they plotted and maneuvered to return Smith to US custody, bending the law and ignoring the judiciary in the process. Witness their relief and rejoicing when the US government promptly announced that it would resume the war games and its assistance programs. They are like little children dancing to their parents' tune and beaming proudly at their applause.

This is not how a mature relationship based on mutual respect and mutual benefit is supposed to be conducted between nations. It is more like the unequal relationship between a colonial master and a subject nation, with US officials dictating what needs to be done and Filipino officials hurrying to do their bidding. But our own officials seem not to have noticed it, or having noticed it, they feel too helpless to protest. No wonder US soldiers regard our women as trophies of war, ready to be picked up and raped.

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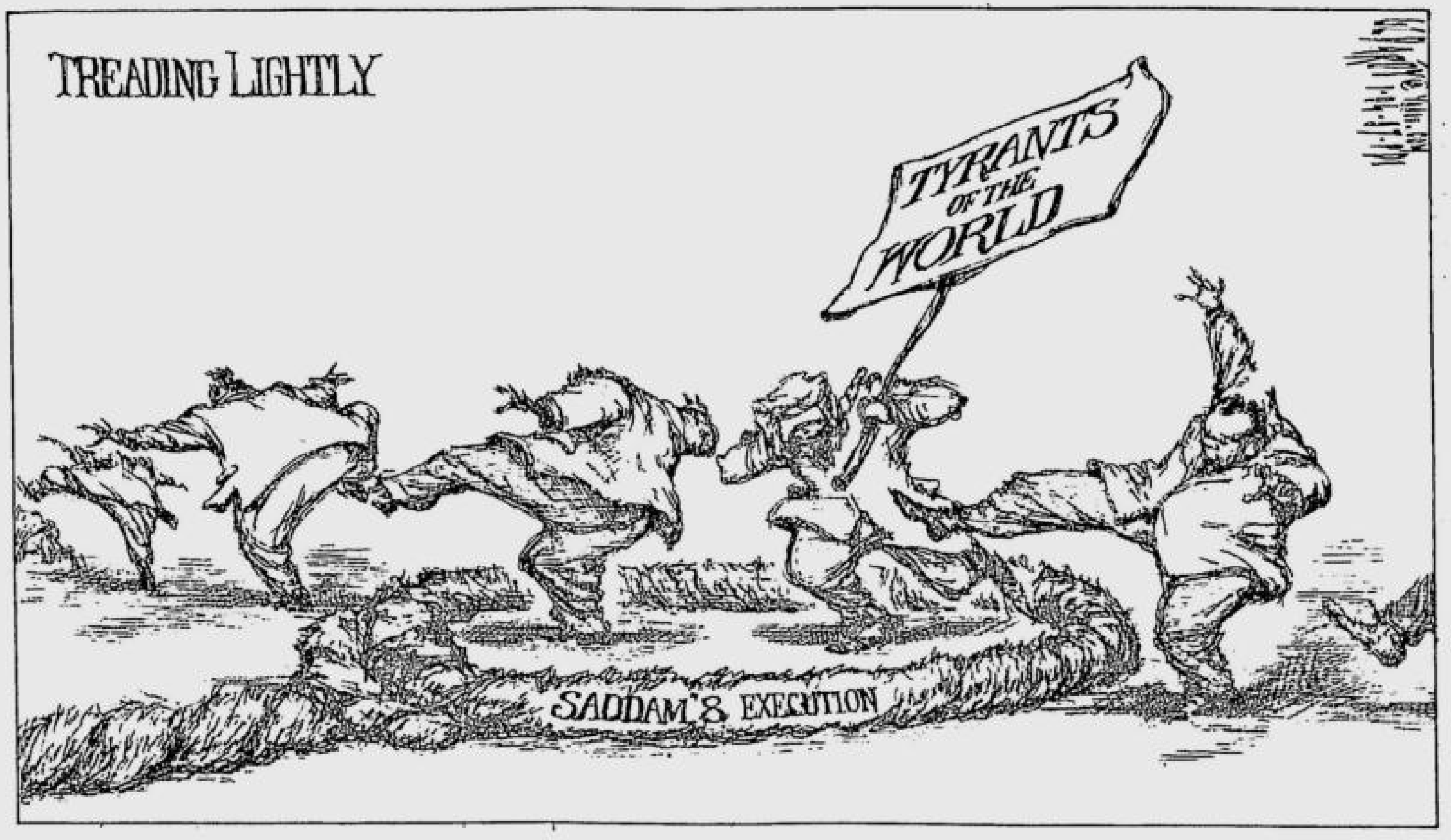

The year's first week

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

THE FIRST WEEK OF A NEW YEAR CARRIES, as a New York Times editorial notes, "the sense of something ended, something begun." Some letters reflect these. Here are excerpts:

Jay and Ness Savage of Kawilihan Village, Pasig wrote:

"The INQUIRER column 'Sprinkling stardust' pinpointed the legal thicket that surrounds Philippine inter-country adoptions. Thus, your daughter flew to their California home a baby adopted from China.

"We're an American-Filipino couple who fostered two children for overseas adoption through Parenting Foundation. We adopted a little girl, now 9. How hard it all was. We wish it would become easier. Thousands of adoptable children here don't get anywhere due to DSWD roadblocks. Parenting Foundation hardly does fostering anymore due to reduced adoptions. Very sad."

Octogenarian Ben Arcinas wrote: "Your column 'Sea ethics' reflects the miserable state of inland fish culture and agriculture in the Pampanga River delta.

"Before and after World War II, tenants in Paombong, Bulacan, raised bangus fry and planted rice. The harvests enabled their children to finish college while they faithfully gave my mother our share. In Iba Oeste, Calumpit, my small tenanted farm was sown to rice or corn. Even without irrigation, it yielded reliable income.

"Today's tenants don't have much even for themselves. Their children have gone abroad or left farming. All I do is pay taxes while both properties were wrecked by salt water seeping in from Manila Bay. Government dug a direct channel in Hagonoy to drain the Candaba swamp area faster during the flood season. My Calumpit tenants can no longer plant crops. In Paombong, bangus growing is a nip-and-tuck affair because of river pollution.

"The barrios which mushroomed down and upstream use the river as septic tank and sink. There is little government regulation. Nearer Manila Bay are the bigger fishponds. But their yields dropped because government failed to curb pollution of the delta.

"The plight of wholesale bangus buyers (*consignatarios*) in Hagonoy, Paombong, Malolos, Bulacan: Many threw in the towel. Some who provided loans for fishpond operators have become impoverished borrowers.

"If the situation continues, inland fish culture and agriculture in the Pampanga River delta area will be a thing of the past in another generation or two."

Pete Pardinas writes in Filipino: "What, sir, can we do? Government is blind and deaf. The big corporations have them in their hands. I am just an ordinary laborer now retired and am now counted among those who cannot eat on time. I wish to help others but I too am needy. What can I do to help?"

Former Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez pinpoints implications of a recent Supreme Court decision against the automatic conversion of Timber Licensing Agreements. Supreme Court Justice Minita Chico-Nazario penned the 58-page decision that reversed the Court of Appeals and the Quezon City Regional Trial Court which both allowed the country's largest logging concession—Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines (Picop)—to convert its 75,545 hectare TLA when it expired. The lower courts permitted its conversion into an Integrated Forest Management Agreement (Ifma)

The legal nitty-gritty need not detain us. But the Court backed the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) finding that TLA No. 43 overlapped ancestral lands of the Manobos. The firm must pay forest charges amounting to P167.5 million, adopt both forest protection and regreening plans.

Perhaps, more important are Court comments on ecological stewardship. Those "fortunate to have been awarded an enormous concession area and thus, a huge chunk of the benefits of this country's natural resources [have the] responsibility to comply with the laws and regulations implementing the stated legislative policies of environmental preservation and benefit distribution. These laws and regulations should not be ignored."

"Courts should not condone such blatant disregard by those who believe they are above the law because of sizable investments and significant number of workers employed," the Court said. "The judicial policy of nurturing prosperity would be better served by granting such concessions to someone who will abide by the law."

From the University of the Philippines Los Baños, Tess VSB comments on the column "Subtle massacre": "We must educate for survival. One is by making it possible for kids to know how to plant nutritious food. Eating papaya for breakfast is not shameful.

"Cuba is a model of making urban farming a reality. Its agricultural scientists did not depend on commercial pesticides but were creative enough to find ecological solutions. Our problems—high cost of transportation, large post-harvest losses, etc.—are similar.

"The Philippines is one of the world's most biodiverse nations. We failed to celebrate this wealth. Instead of making solutions possible, intellectuals remain 'expectators.' Yet the consciousness of backyard farming was only a memory done by our ancestors. If the schools provide this kind of classes ... people become empowered.

"Many of my batchmates are now in the agriculture department... But I am guilty, too. For in my youth, I failed to realize this. Even in UPLB, so much vanity is placed on titles. In my time, we had the biggest number of Ph.D.s in the country! It's so ironic...."

* * *

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As the new year turns

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

AFP HAD AN INTERESTING ITEM ABOUT the fate of dictators, which appeared on our front page last Sunday. It included a whole bunch of people, not the least of them Saddam Hussein who was hanged by the Iraqis but with obvious American approval the day before.

The list included our very own Ferdinand Marcos. The part about him read: "Ousted in February 1986 after a 20-year rule, the Philippine dictator went into exile in Hawaii where he died on Sept. 28, 1989, at the age of 72." That has to be qualified a bit. Marcos ruled legitimately for close to seven years before he became a dictator for less than 14 years after declaring martial law.

The dictators are classified into four categories: those who died in office, in exile, were executed, and are facing justice. Many names are familiar: Adolf Hitler (committed suicide in a bunker in April 1945), Pol Pot (died in exile in April 1998), Benito Mussolini (shot to death by partisans in April 1945 while fleeing for Switzerland with his mistress), Saddam Hussein, Augusto Pinochet (died in December 2006 of a heart attack while facing charges of mass murder), Slobodan Milosevic (died in prison in The Hague in March 2006 while on trial for war crimes).

It's a cautionary tale on the whole for would-be dictators. Only rarely do they manage to stay in office and die of old age in a state of grace or serenity. Some do; unfortunately life isn't always fair. It's an interesting story, the AFP item, but quite an incomplete one—apart from a controversial one (some will protest violently the inclusion of people like Mao Zedong). I myself have three more entries to add to that list.

One, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Came to power in January 2001 on the wings of people power. Stole the elections in 2004 with the connivance of a Comelec official and has since used force to stay in power. Has caused the wholesale murder of political activists and provincial journalists, apart from the wholesale murder of democracy and decency. Remains in office, but is everywhere hounded by the writing on the wall.

Two, Richard Nixon. (It is a testament to the narrowness of the American viewpoint that it is able to espy dictators elsewhere but not under its nose. If a dictator is a self-appointed leader who tyrannizes his constituents, then surely a self-anointed leader who tyrannizes the world constitutes an even bigger dictator?) Escalated the Vietnam War by bombing Cambodia and Laos. Along with Henry Kissinger, he instigated the coup in Chile which led to the massacre of more than 3,000 Chileans. Why only Pinochet had to face justice afterward and not Nixon and Kissinger, well, that is the world order as we know it. Nixon further ushered in the US policy of supporting tyrants all over the Third Word, not least Marcos, with the unstated motto, "We don't mind that he's an SOB, so long as he's our SOB," which led to the slaughter of tens of thousands of people in poor countries.

He died in April 1994 from a stroke while preparing to have dinner. His last words apparently were calling out to a maid for help. It is not known if his maid was Vietnamese, but he did not survive the episode.

George W. Bush. Stole the vote in Florida from Al Gore. Deliberately lied to the American people about Saddam's weapons of mass destruction and, despite the loud protestations of the UN and pretty nearly all the world, with the exception of leaders like those of Britain and Australia who think American and European lives are worth more than Iraqi and Arab ones, bombed Iraq to submission. Meanwhile, Osama bin Laden, who authored 9/11 but whose family has business dealings with Bush's own family, remains scot-free.

Until recently, Bush, who has added whole new meanings to mediocrity and pettiness, apart from viciousness and murderousness, has been free to contemplate carving the world into his image and likeness—a chilling thought, given his image and likeness physically, never mind mentally. Indeed, until recently, he and his bunch have been free to have their way with America, like Daniel Smith and his bunch with "Nicole."

They've already hanged Saddam Hussein. When the hell are they going to hang him?

* * *

Sunday night wasn't so bad. The din lasted for only about half an hour where I live. And the smoke wasn't as thick as in previous years, though my throat still felt raw next day, a hangover from my asthmatic days as a kid. But I still minded the pyrotechnics in light of one thing: Surely all that money that went up in smoke, completely literally, could have gone to feeding the hungry and putting a roof over the heads of the storm-ravaged Bicolanos?

I know exploding firecrackers on New Year's Eve is a tradition, but tradition, as Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof" learned, can always be changed. We also have a tradition of *bayanihan*, as far as I can recall, and I cannot understand why we've allowed that to drift away like shifting sand.

The tradition, I know, says that if you make that much ruckus on New Year's Eve, you will drive the demons away. Frankly, I find that incomprehensible. I don't know how the belief began, but surely demons are more likely to thrive in that madness than be scared by it? In any case, I've always thought there was a surer way to drive out the demon of hunger that stalks Bicolandia and the eastern seaboard of the Visayas today, and that is by giving food and clothing to the victims in lieu of burning things, and uttering a silent prayer to go along with it.

Indeed, I've always thought there was a surer way to drive out the other and far more vicious demons in our midst, a way we discovered some time ago and have since turned into hallowed tradition. It's called people power.

Ambiguities

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

LIKE THE VISITING FORCES AGREEMENT, YESterday's ruling by the Court of Appeals seemed to have enough ambiguities to ensure that both sides in the custody issue could push their own interpretation of "victory." Evelyn Ursua, Nicole's lawyer, asserted to the media that their side was victorious since the court held that Judge Benjamin Pozon's ruling to detain Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith at the city jail after his conviction was "correct." But Jose Justiniano, Smith's lawyer, pointed out that the CA decided that the custody issue had become moot since the executive branch had already transferred him to the US Embassy. That he remains there is victory for Smith, his lawyer said.

About the only unambiguous move in this whole controversy was the US military's announcement, as soon as the Department of Interior and Local Government had sprung Smith out of the city jail, that the Balikatan exercises would resume. That only angered the militants more, for it really looked like a squeeze play by the world's only superpower. No subtleties about it.

* * *

It has been observed in legal circles that the CA has studiously avoided calling Smith's "midnight transfer" illegal and has not ordered that he be returned to the city jail, which it could have done. Earlier it merely "noted" the pleading of the Department of Foreign Affairs to allow the US Embassy to take custody of Smith, in accordance with the VFA. That action became the basis for the executive branch's startling decision to send him to the embassy, without waiting for a court order. This has been loudly condemned by militant elements and, indeed, it's quite hard to defend, despite President Macapagal-Arroyo's plea for understanding. People are asking why the government did not wait for the CA to rule on the petition. Apparently the answer lies in its uncertainty as to when that issue would be decided, and its fear that a protracted decision would further damage RP-US relations.

* * *

The militant group handling Nicole filed a contempt charge against several Cabinet officials who were involved in the decision to "spring" Smith. They also asked the CA to arrest Smith again, saying he has "escaped" from the city jail. Yesterday, the government was poised to ask the court to throw out that contempt charge as it was merely an "ancillary move" rendered moot by yesterday's ruling. After studying the text of the ruling, I suspect the court would do just that.

* * *

Earlier I noted that Speaker Jose de Venecia celebrated the biblical age of 70 in New York City last Dec. 26 by witnessing how his interfaith initiative and debt-for-equity programs were adopted and enhanced by the United Nations. I observed that JDV is like the proverbial prophet, better appreciated outside than in his own country. He's constantly ribbed abroad about how he has worked so much to advance the parliamentary institution through the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace that he headed in 2004, yet in his home turf, his parliamentary advocacy has been blocked by reactionary forces. But whether Charter change succeeds or remains a pipe dream, JDV has already achieved so much through vital legislation in his long political career, and it's relevant to recall some of them on his birthday.

* * *

One is the overseas dollar-remittance program which De Venecia, then 30, conceptualized while serving as minister-counselor in the Philippine Embassy in South Vietnam in the late 1960s. That program has since brought about $150 billion into our country and has become the major pillar of the economy. It has been copied by Turkey, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand and other economies. In a recent chat, JDV recalled with a laugh how in those years the officials of the Central Bank and finance department were against it. It was only after a series of meetings that he succeeded in getting their grudging approval (they reasoned behind his back that anyway, the Americans would never agree to it). Years later, various CB administrations—from Cuaderno to Tetangco—would recognize De Venecia for his pioneering efforts in the remittance field.

* * *

He next met with officials of the US Treasury and multilateral financial institutions in Washington, who had to approve remittances of Filipino workers in US bases in Okinawa, Korea, northern Thailand, etc. They were skeptical. But he argued that all the funds slumbering in banks were being used to fund communist movements in RP, Laos, South Vietnam and other places, when they could be used to develop those poor countries. That did it, he recalled, and US President Richard Nixon himself approved it.

In the 1970s, the remittance program grew and expanded on the strength of some 50,000 Filipinos JDV deployed in the Middle East, in his oil exploration, construction and port operations businesses.

* * *

There's also the BOT law of which JDV was the principal author, which has brought in some $30 billion in foreign infrastructure investments. This was also met with a lot of skepticism, but today it's the key to developing the countryside.

The same skepticism attended the military bases conversion program that he first conceived in the last years of the Marcos regime. He recalled that Marcos himself was against it as were his generals, who didn't fancy having their turf invaded. When he became a congressman during the Cory years, JDV again filed that bill and this time, it was Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos and AFP Chief of Staff Renato de Villa, among other people, who were doubtful about the wisdom of disposing of Fort Bonifacio, Camp Aguinaldo and other military lands. After the Americans left, the people around Subic and Clark registered objections to the BCDA bill. But now the Global City in The Fort and all the foreign and local corporations thriving in Subic and Clark are gleaming testimony to how JDV was always a step ahead of his time.

'Babaylan' crossings

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

You have tampered with the women/ You have struck a rock/ You have dislodged a boulder/ You will be crushed.

—from an Afrikaans freedom song

THAT IS A LINE FROM AN AFRIKAANS FREEdom song sung at the historic women's freedom march in 1956 in South Africa. The minister of education recalled those lines during the 2002 ground-breaking of the Opra Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in Soweto. The academy opened as 2007 was being ushered in and was ready to take in its first batch of girls.

That school was Oprah's promise to the revered former South African President Nelson Mandela when she visited in 2002. Her initial promise of $10,000 became $40,000. Oprah's choice of place was Soweto. Her choice of students were girls from underprivileged backgrounds whom she herself had interviewed and handpicked.

Now the academy has opened. Many girls who will go there will be trained to be future leaders and achievers in their chosen fields, compassionate, strong, giving. And beautiful, of course, inside and out.

In an article, a girl who was interviewed recounted the "phenomenal few minutes" she had with Oprah: "(She) asked me three questions. What I want to become. Why. And what good advice I've given anyone."

Oprah has shown a great example to the rich, famous and influential. This bright and influential woman of US television and one of the world's richest came from a difficult childhood (she was black, poor and abused) has moved on to great heights and expanded her embrace.

I hope I'd be able to see something like the Oprah school rising in these islands. But we are not wanting in schools for girls, only most, if not all, of them are "exclusive" for girls who are mostly already privileged. Many of them do not really have big, urgent dreams to be something for humanity.

Yes, I know there are schools for girls that have made big strides in educating their students to be strong women of character, but so many other concerns—financial, among them—get in the way.

Oprah is indeed a priestess, a modern *babaylan*.

The book "Centennial Crossings: Readings on Babaylan Feminism in the Philippines" may be a year late—one year after the centennial of the feminist movement in the Philippines—but it sure came out at a time when women's issues were (and are) very much in the forefront. There was the recent conviction of a Filipina's rapist, a US serviceman, and the consequent debate over the latter's custody pending the decision of a higher court. Then there was his "midnight crossing" or transfer to the custody of the US Embassy, the Philippine government's way of acquiescing to the US, or else…

Before feminism there was the so-called "babaylanism," the book says. This was a form of women's collective consciousness indigenous to the Philippines. A *babaylan* is a woman priest, healer and visionary. Alas, little is said of her in history books. This is not because there are few historical data on her. This is because women, in historical accounts by men, were almost always portrayed as, and reduced to being, mere passive spectators, not active participants in the unfolding of history.

The *babaylan* spirit did not die because it was kept alive by cultural traditions and practices, it stayed on despite being marginalized because of foreign colonization and neglect in the pages of history.

Now women are not only making it come alive again, they are making sure that it is kept alive not just in practice but also in the written word.

"Centennial Crossings" (edited by Fe B. Mangahas and Jenny R. Llaguno) is a collection of women's writings that show that the *babaylan* spirit has not died. The modern *babaylans* are making sure the spirit does not ever die, that more women find and identify that spirit in them.

The book features both personal reflections and academic analyses. The spiritual and cerebral intertwine. Women from different disciplines and background discover the *babaylan* in them and in their creative process. A dancer, a writer, an academic, a religious, an activist—each one has discovered the name of the in-dwelt *babaylan*. She has a name, a face, a voice.

Mangahas puts the *babaylan* in historico-cultural context. Agnes Miclat Cacayan discovers the *babaylan* dancing in wholeness. Arche L. Ligo searched for her among women on a mystical mountain. Sr. Rosario Battung, RGS, found her among the women healers of the north.

And then there are those who have found the *babaylan* alive in themselves, making them dance, sing, create, pray, teach, reach out.

Mangahas writes: "Even among feminists in the Philippines today few realize that feminism as it refers to women's political consciousness is a borrowed concept. The word 'feminism' was first used in this country by Concepcion Felix et al., with the founding of Asociacion Feminista Filipina (in 1905). Antedating this usage, the word *'feminista'* and even the earlier Spanish word *'femenina'*, there was the word *'babaylanismo'*—a form of women's consciousness indigenous to the Philippines."

Mangahas adds that although babaylanism was long in evolution and yet rooted in Philippine culture, it remains an esoteric topic, if not a dead relic of the past.

"Centennial Crossings" proves that babaylanism is not a thing of the past. It is a great read, I promise you.

And I discovered something about myself, too. I think there is a *babaylan* in me. You'll find her there, too, if you look closer, deeper.

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Palace none the wiser

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

ON SEPT. 29, 2005, I WROTE ("FIVE MONTHS") that the country had five months to decide four issues. The first was whether to accept or reject amendments to the Constitution. The second was whether the elections of 2007 would emerge as a sweeping endorsement of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's incumbency, or leave her as the lamest of lame-duck presidents. The third was whether a new impeachment attempt should be supported or not. And the fourth? If Charter change pushed through, and she has to leave office by 2007 or, was allowed to stay until 2010, should life for her be made a living hell as case after case is filed against her in the courts?

In the same column, I pointed out some other things that might clarify the situation. First, she would have had the chance to appoint around four members of the Commission on Elections, so we would know if she's serious about cleaning up our elections or not. In that period of time, our Congress would have had the chance to pass a new budget, so we would know what the true cost of her governance—and continuing it—would be. Also, within that time frame, the specific constitutional amendments would have been formally proposed, and we would know if either the President or the House cared about what people thought.

Recall that back in September 2005, the public had a sense that some sort of confrontation was certain come February 2006. The confrontation began on the anniversary of the 1986 people power revolution, which was marked by significant demonstrations and an aborted withdrawal of support by some elements of the armed forces. The demonstrations were dispersed; the armed forces decided in favor of the status quo. Reacting to the crisis, the President attempted to impose order by exercising powers that the Supreme Court eventually decided weren't hers to exercise.

The public, as measured by the opinion polls, rejected the idea of a military solution to the political crisis, but also expressed apprehension over the President's efforts to expand her powers. It is only in recent months, with the resignation of Avelino Cruz Jr. as defense secretary, that the public has come to know that martial law had indeed been considered, and failing that, some other kind of emergency rule. If the President overreached herself, she'd wanted to overreach further, and was foiled not by public opinion but by opposition within her own official family.

The intrusion of a military-based solution to break the political impasse extended the period in which the questions I posed would be resolved. It took the rest of 2006 to develop answers. But we got them. The Supreme Court rejected the people's initiative and was praised by the public for doing so; and the public rejected the proposed amendments when the House tried to ram them through. In clamoring for elections to the extent that the public outcry scared the bejesus out of the President and the House, the public, too, expressed its willingness to go to the polls in May and decide the political fate of the administration.

The third question was decided by the President achieving her short-term goal, defeating a second impeachment effort, but in a manner that makes her having to defeat a third attempt after the midterm elections a necessity. And fourth, the catalogue of presidential desperation means her options to prolong her stay in office are getting fewer and more politically and financially expensive.

Consider the other things that might clarify the situation. A vacancy remains in the Comelec and the President shows no signs of wanting to fill it up. So while her new appointments have, on the whole, been credible, they remain a minority in a body still dominated by those whose conduct helped disgrace the 2004 elections. The President also failed to enact the 2006 budget because she was intent on abolishing the Senate and preventing anyone from testifying against her in front of it. And as far as amendments were concerned, the President and her allies only pulled back when their efforts provoked public anger.

But they were willing to risk that anger then, and are willing to do so, again. Only a reckless and profoundly contemptuous administration would revive the people's initiative, support Virgilio Garcillano for Congress, and hand over a convicted American Marine over the holidays.

Our attention has been focused on how those opposed to the President failed in February last year; we haven't focused enough on how the President, too, failed, in that crucial month. It can be said neither side managed to harness public opinion, because that opinion has been firm, and consistent, not only since the President's troubles began in July 2005, but as far back as the effort to force the resignation of Joseph Estrada in 2001.

That opinion seems firmly defined by what is constitutional in the broadest sense. Whenever any solution has verged on the unconstitutional or extra-constitutional, public opinion has lashed out—against protesters, oppositionists and the administration and the armed forces. When constitutional processes have been impaired or appeared to have been tinkered with unfairly, public opinion has lashed out, too: against emergency rule, the gagging of civil servants, the arbitrary detention of oppositionists, the transformation of impeachment into the sale of votes to the highest bidder, and the abuse of the people's initiative method or the House effort to single-handedly amend the Constitution.

That being said, the opposition has learned more than the Palace has. It has learned to accept the public's demand to limit political options to the familiar and democratic. No corresponding dedication is evident, or can be expected, from an emboldened Palace.

Helping hands

YOUNG BLOOD

Eugenio Antonio E. Dig

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

IT HAS ALMOST BEEN A YEAR SINCE THE SOUTHERN Leyte disaster occurred. About 1,000 people died in the landslide that buried Barangay Guinsaugon in St. Bernard.

Ten months after the tragedy, another misfortune happened. "Reming" crippled the Bicol region, specially the province of Albay, after pummeling it with strong winds and heavy rains that resulted in mudslides. One thousand bodies are believed to have been buried in the mud that swept over Sto. Domingo, Daraga, Guinobatan and Legazpi City.

If I was deeply touched by the cries of Guinsaugon when about 1,000 of its residents died, I lament even more the tragedy that struck the whole Bicol region. The weeping of Albay over the loss of more than a thousand residents keeps ringing in my ears and causes tears to fall from my eyes. Indeed it strikes deeper to hear about a disaster when the victims are your *kababayan*.

When I was still living in Gubat, Sorsogon, I experienced a number of typhoons. But in all the 16 years that I spent in Gubat, I never heard of a supertyphoon with such ruinous and catastrophic effects as Reming. While some of the typhoons I experienced blew away roofs from houses and blew down trees, I never saw cadavers scattered along streets or people digging for anything they could recover, not to mention loved ones, from houses buried by mud. The worst typhoon I can recall happened in 1998, and it shattered my grandmother's store and left some people homeless.

Bicol, like the Samar provinces, is always the first place in the county to be hit by a typhoon. It often suffers the heaviest damage to agriculture, roads and infrastructure. After Reming, the local governments of Bicol had a grimmer task to perform: embalming and burying the more than 300 bodies recovered, searching hundreds of others who were missing, providing food, water and clothing for over 500,000 victims, building shelters for 30,000 homeless families and providing livelihood for families whose rice fields, tricycles, jeeps, poultry and livestock disappeared.

As I watched the news about the *delubyo* in Albay, I couldn't help but feel deeply affected. As far as I know, this was the first time Albay suffered such a devastation. After the landslide in Guinsaugon, I was shocked to know the high death toll and felt the pain of losing fellow Filipinos. However, when I listened to reports about the deaths in Albay, I felt as if I had lost friends and family members.

But it has been said that from every great misfortune, there will always emerge heroes. At the height of Reming in Albay, the people helped their neighbors get out of their houses and into safer places. By then, the flood water had already reached as high as 10 feet and they had to walk on the roofs to get out of harm's way.

When Reming was gone, more heroes became known. The members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines lived up to their mandate to protect the people, helping in the rescue of survivors and in the search for the dead and the missing. Several rescuers and volunteers belonging to the Philippine National Red Cross and other organizations also helped to ease the sufferings of families in Bicol.

It was very pleasing to hear that Bicol was getting help from our countrymen as well as from several other countries. The Pope offered prayers for the victims, particularly the dead. Canada, Japan and Spain gave money, food and clothes.

Several foundations and private companies joined other volunteers in distributing relief goods to the Bicolanos. Some gave words of encouragement or healing to those who had been traumatized by the tragedy.

Even before Reming made its landfall, the media were already reporting about the supertyphoon. And they did a good job in telling the rest of the country about the death and destruction it left behind. More than that, they also accommodated calls for assistance in whatever way. They linked the victims with their kin while power was off and cell phones didn't work.

All these humanitarian acts helped ease the pain of my *kababayan*. But I felt most deeply touched by what the province of Southern Leyte did. The day after Reming passed, Southern Leyte dispatched two teams to Albay to assist in the rescue and retrieval operations. This was meant to reciprocate and demonstrate its appreciation for the assistance it received from many places after Guinsaugon was buried by a landslide. As Gov. Rosette Lerias put it, "We know how they (in Albay) feel because we have experienced it more than anybody else. It's our turn to help them."

I thank everyone who has helped the Bicol region. Thank you for the continuous prayers, for the food, water and clothes, for the services offered for free, and for the sympathy. Thank you for your heroic and noble deeds.

Eugenio Antonio E. Dig, 20, is a graduate of BA Public Administration from the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

THEY SAID

Shameless

"*Talagang bastusan na ito nang harap-harapan.* All that they would defend was the relationship between the US and Philippines… If I had the choice, I would like to be a US citizen now because they (the US) would defend a citizen, even if he is a convicted criminal, while the Philippines would not defend someone who is fighting for her rights."

—Nicole on the transfer of rape convict Daniel Smith from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy

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LETTERS

GMA's broken promises

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO will go down in Philippine history as the politician with the biggest number of broken promises, the least principled and the wiliest, what with all the things she has been doing to mislead and fool everyone and make a mockery of the laws of the land just so she could stay in power much, much longer.

Ms Arroyo could not have done those things by herself. With this in mind, we are reminded of the late Ronald Reagan. When he was the president of the United States, his wife Nancy kept an eagle eye on people who called on him. Many of them were his personal friends and political allies, but they represented various and, often, conflicting interests.

Sensing that their differences often put Reagan in a quandary, Nancy, his closest adviser, would often warn him about their real motives. Her warnings went so far that at one time he reportedly told her to "Get off my back!" although all she wanted was to insulate and protect him from those she perceived as snakes slithering around him.

But the burden on Ms Arroyo's back is so heavy and forceful. And she doesn't have the guts to tell him "Get off my back!"

—RAMON A. MAYUGA,
GeRMayuga@aol.com

Only hope for clean politics

OUR COUNTRY WILL NEVER get out of the political quagmire it is in unless we, the people, and the Catholic Church take an active role in removing the corrupt politicians from government.

Charter change can't do this. A new Constitution will not make any difference, if the same politicians of dubious characters run the government. For they, as usual, will only pass laws that will benefit them (e.g., pork barrel).

Character change? Yes, maybe, but the Church has been calling for it since time immemorial. For the common *tao*, character change is too general an admonition to follow and, sometimes, it collides with our cultural practices like *utang na loob*.

So, what changes am I talking about? Simple. The Church should start endorsing national and local candidates; and urge (but not force) our people to vote as one. However, this course of action should not be adopted as something that should be done in all elections henceforth. This should be done in the next several elections only—to ensure that enough good politicians are elected to government offices, especially at the national level.

I know that there will be resistance to this proposal. But a big religious group has been doing this, and I don't hear anybody complaining. The Church can make the endorsement through its recognized groups, like the El Shaddai, Couples for Christ, Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals, etc.

Why the Church? Because it's the only institution left that the people can trust, that we can get reliable information from, that has a vast network of parishioners. The Church is our answer to the moneyed and powerful people who buy, intimidate and silence the media to misinform the people or hide the truth from them.

—ARMOND M. FERRIOLS, M.D.,
rmnd_ferriolsmd
@yahoo.com.ph

Artwork on 'Pacman' done by student from Tacloban

I WAS READING THE DEC. 30 issue of the INQUIRER and I was surprised to see an artwork I requested my son John, a third year multimedia arts student of the College of Saint Benilde, to do last May 2006, when he was on vacation in our hometown in Tacloban City.

The "National Hero" artwork was originally titled "Manny Rizal." It was done for the fans of Pacman on www.mannypacquiao.ph. It was uploaded there last May 2006 on the "Manny Pacquiao the destroyer thread."

My son and I were not aware that it caught the attention of many people outside the PACLAND site.

The artwork was first featured in the Philippine Star and a week later in the Mark Logan portion of "TV Patrol" together with other creations made by PACLAND artists. This created an uproar among PACLAND artists because the source of the artwork, which is www.mannypacquiao.ph, was not identified.

An artwork and parody section was later created on the site to accommodate aspiring artists. My son's handle in that site is "Dung Markus." You may visit the site and see the artwork and parody section. As proof that he made the artwork, he has the PSD of the artwork. The two photos used were taken from HBO (Manny's face) and a "Godfather" site (the original image is that of Robert de niro).

I am writing this letter so that at least you would know the creator.

—VIRGILIO G. TELMO,
489 Sandy Lane,
Marasbaras, Tacloban City

Another test of commitment to protect consumers

THIS HAS REFERENCE TO MYRna P. Valdez's letter titled "Who must pay for damaged transmission lines?" (PDI 12-23-2006) According to her, Transco is set to file an application with the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to recover the repair cost of transmission lines damaged by typhoon "Senyang," which means the "wheeling" rates will increase, which in turn means more expensive electricity for consumers.

Since Transco is a government-owned and controlled corporation, it is our understanding that the government should subsidize the repair cost of transmission lines damaged by "force majeure," especially because all government assets, including Transco's, are covered by insurance, for which premiums have already been paid.

Transco's application, invoking Article 10 of the Transmission Wheeling Rate Guidelines (TWRG), also seeks the approval of the ERC to pass on to consumers the cost of damage to transmission lines. If the application is approved, Transco will be able to collect easy, additional profits from poor electricity consumers. Entertaining such a thought is tantamount to a betrayal of Transco's franchise and mocks the objective of the Epira (Electric Power Industry Reform Act) to protect consumers.

On the other hand, the approval of the application will indicate that the ERC is willing to be a party to the exploitation of electric power consumers by allowing the big power industry players to take advantage of the failures of leadership, weaknesses of institutions and legal loopholes.

—JULIE AVILA,
spokesperson,
Kababaihang Kontra sa
Kuryenteng Mahal (KKKM),
kkkmorg@yahoo.com

SMOG hides the Makati skyline

PDI PHOTO

Does gov't have the will to enforce environmental laws?

LAST NOVEMBER, OUR PRESIdent went to play golf in Antipolo. Afterwards, she reportedly said that she was surprised at the amount of smog over Metro Manila because she had thought all the while that we had solved the problem already!

I cannot believe she can't see what I see every day! I live in Manila, near España, and there is a yucky brown haze in my neighborhood. What government officials should do is come here, get out of their air-conditioned, deodorized cars with tinted windows, and experience what ordinary people smell and see every day. Non-vehicle owners are suffocating due to the rude, sickening smoke caused by other people.

This is not just happening in Manila. This is also happening in small towns. Last Oct. 1, I was in the town of Taal, but its ancient beauty was marred by the blue smoke billowing out of two-stroke tricycles. These two-strokes, which are all over the nation, were supposed to be phased out but again, on this, the government is dragging its feet.

You would think that over five years after the Clean Air Act was passed, there would be no more smoke-belchers. While every day they blow out their poisonous fumes, nearly all of them have up-to-date license stickers. And what is ironic is that the stickers are pasted on plates that proclaim "Matatag Ang Republic."

Ha! Because the administration certainly is not strong when enforcing its laws against polluters. Maybe, instead the license plates should read: "Umuubo Ang Republic."

—JONATHAN FOE,
931 Ma. Cristina St.,
Sampaloc, Manila

So what if only 15,000 people attended the rally?

WHOSE PARTY WAS IT ANYWAY? Rina Jimenez-David seemed to know the answer to her question, why did she not answer it herself? (PDI, 12/19/06)

The invitation was for a prayer rally and I suppose the permit was granted accordingly. So our bishops, the teachers and servants of the people of God, came to lead in praying. And what we had was no ordinary prayer but the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass—liturgies of the Word and the Eucharist.

For us Roman Catholics, the Holy Mass is the apex of our Christian life— praying together as one through Him, with Him and in Him. Him who was born in a manger, nailed to the cross and rose from the dead. Him whose body we eat and whose blood we drink. For David, it might be a mere "exercise in pious futility." Not for us. It's everything, really.

David got disappointed because of the number of people who joined the prayer rally in Luneta last Dec. 17. Quite small. Only 15,000? 30,000? Really disappointing for "grown-ups" obsessed with numbers, as the fox of St. Exupery would say. She failed to consider though the heavenly hosts, the angels who were there singing hosannas.

But even if the turnout reached half a million, or like that one in January 1995 when John Paul II came, apparently, still she would not have been satisfied because the prayer rally pushed John the Baptist's agenda, not the one that was in her mind.

—TED DONO,
teddono@yahoo.com

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Thursday, January 4, 200

ABC Christmas iba!

THE BIGGEST DANCE EVENT THIS
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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				TNA Wrestling		Metro		Big News	S.O.S		Hayop Na Hayop		Wow Maling-Mali Bytes	Sentro	The Best Of Dokyu		Araw-Araw Premyo Sa Rosbo	Simbang Gabi
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente Do Ti	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Bet The Vandel Buster	Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15 PM)		Maging Sino Ka Man	Princess Hours		Bandila	SOCO	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		CSI: Miami (Season 4)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)		Sports Disaster IV		Ripley's Believe It or Not		The 4400 (Season 2)		Fear Factor (Season V)		The Amazing Race Asia		Alias (Season V)		Lost (Season II)	
bTV		B-Ballography: W Reed	NBA Action	NBA Spurs @ Twolves					NCAA Men's Basketball				NBA Live	NBA Fantasy Hoops	NBA Spurs @ Twolves				
Cinema One		[illegible] (Movie)				Blue Moon				Ako'y Ibigin Mo Lalaking Matapang				Valentina				The Lilian Velez Story	
Cinemax			The Spitfire Grill (3:45 PM)				Rag and Bone (5:40 PM)			Descent				The Take				Boss Of Bosses	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	News Asia Global Challenges/ [illegible] Global Challenges	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		Revelations		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		Investigative Reports		Law and Order		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Bones		Threshold		E-Ring	
Discovery Channel		Asian Enigma		Man Made Marvels		More Than Human		Zero Hour		Extreme Engineering		The Greatest Ever		Best of Discovery 2006				Power Zone	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Shuriken School	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Monster Allergy	Shuriken School	Buzz On Maggie	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		English Premier Football League				Women's Pro Billiards '06		Cheerleading	Motorsport Asia	Atlantic Coast Conf. Pennsylvania Vs North Carolina				Sportscenter Asia	NBA Fastbreak	Motorsport Asia	Billiards Int'l Events '06 Championship		Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Beach Girls		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Will & Grace	Friends	Simple Life 4	Rated Oh! 6	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen (Degeneres) Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Nanny 911		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Kapuso Movie Festival				Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika	StarStruck: The Next Level	Bakekang	A Rosy Life (9:15 PM)		Magpakailanman		Saksi	100% Pinoy
Hallmark Channel		Missing		Lost Child				McLeod's Daughters VI		Family Law III		ER I		Spooks		Wire In The Blood		Wire In The Blood	
HBO		The Education Of Little Tree				Friday Night Lights				Born Free A New Adventure				Serenity				Vampire In Brooklyn	
Hero TV	Megaman	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	AmDriver	Megaman	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		EBC Earth Files		Japan Video Topics/ Aims		Travel Philippines	Japan Video Topics/ Aims	EBC Earth Files	IBC News Tonite	Metroball Show	
JackTV		Smackdown				X-Men	The Batman	Experience		Mad TV		Just For Laughs	Scare Tactics	Distraction	Banzai	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Premium Blend	The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Get Color	Wolfgang Puck	Inside Dish	Rachel Ray		Sensible Chic	At Home With	Barefoot Contessa	Everyday Italian	Martha		Look For Less	Good Finds	Rachel Ray		E! True Hollywood Story		Your Private Island	Genuine Article
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX News	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXlog
National Geographic	Monkey Business	Megastructures: Air Force Transport		National Geographic's Amazing Moments		Naked Science: Birth Of The Universe		Top 5 - Animals Like Us: [illegible]		National Geographic Special		Wow! The Whale [illegible]		Megastructures: Megafactories (Ferrari)		Naked Science: Shark Attacks		Amazing Moments: Most Extreme Moments	
NBN					Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Siya		Teledyaryo W/ Ray Langit & Angelique Lazo	Ting Ng Bayan		Equilibrium		Teledyaryo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Gabay Sa Kalusugan	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Pagbubuyog		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous	Dark Oracle	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Soul to Soul				Mag-asawa				Paano Ba Ang Magmahal				Bagets 2				Sana Totoo Na
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	Family Zoo		News On Q	Women's Desk		Irene	Value Added Treasures
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Dee's Day		Roundtable Discussion	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	The 4400		Medium		Cold Case		Newswatch Now	P-Max	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Poker Hour
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Friends Again		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports						Gillette World Sport	Rookie Manual			WPT Tour				Hoop Nation		Sportsdesk			
Star Movies	Happy Gilmore (2:45 PM)			Mozart And The Whale (4:15 PM)				Beethoven			Relative Strangers			Be Cool				Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful	General Hospital		Desire Table For Three		Arrested Development	The Simpsons	Friends	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	Hope & Faith	According To Jim	The Office	Two And A Half Men	Desire Table For Three		Seinfeld	Hope & Faith
Studio 23								Blog	Pinoy Dream Academy	Wazzup Wazzup	Totally Outrageous	Two And A Half Men	Will & Grace	Grey's Anatomy		News Central	Oprah (10:45PM)		MYXlog
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kaka at Claire Kaagapay Nyo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15 PM)							

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Cordillera watersheds face extinction

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE RAPID DESTRUCTION of forests is fast pushing the Cordillera's major watersheds into critical levels and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) is alarmed over their possible extinction if no efforts are made to immediately rescue them.

Abraham Akilit, NIA regional irrigation manager in the Cordillera, said forest fires, erosion, construction of houses and expanding vegetable farms have threatened to wipe out the region's mossy forests and contaminate rivers and headwaters.

He said 12,000 hectares of watershed along Tadian and Bauko towns in Mt. Province, and Buguias, Kabayan and Bokod towns in Benguet are considered "critically endangered" due to man-made intrusions.

Sedimentation has also threatened to cut short the lifespan of the region's four major rivers: Agno (Benguet), Chico (Kalinga and Mt. Province), Abra (Abra) and Magat (Ifugao), he said.

He said Agno and Chico rivers are the most critical based on their current levels of degradation.

"Right now, we have devised a master plan to save the watersheds through a rehabilitation program that would integrate the water resources and forests along the four major river systems," he said.

He said the NIA has devised a master plan which calls for the construction of watershed bases, rehabilitation of communal irrigation systems, agro-forestry and slope protection.

Akilit said the plan, which costs P762.4 million, would implement a watershed rehabilitation that would involve community participation anchored on a reward system.

The system, he said, would allow indigenous communities to help manage the region's forests and watersheds. These communities, in turn, would be allowed to gain access to the region's water resources and forests products.

A NIA development report showed that the Cordillera has an area of 1,829,368 hectares which is considered the watershed of all major rivers and creeks, including those that flow from the Ilocos and Cagayan regions.

The Agno, Chico Abra and Magat rivers trace their headwaters from the Mt. Data Watershed in Bauko and Tadian towns in Mt. Province.

But Akilit said the water levels of the four rivers are slowly drying up because of the continuing degradation of the watersheds.

Of the region's 1,512,538 hectares of forest land, only 58 percent or 93,766 hectares, remain as forested and the remaining 42 percent are already denuded, NIA records showed.

The region's watersheds can irrigate 71,916 hectares of land but only 43,876 hectares are being serviced, or a gap of 28,040 hectares, records showed. *Delmar Cariño, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

World Bank cancels ₱800-M loan for Halsema

BAGUIO CITY—THE WORLD Bank has cancelled an P800-million loan intended for the rehabilitation of the Halsema Highway from Bauko, Mt. Province to Banaue, Ifugao, an official of the Department of Public Works and Highways in the Cordillera said.

No reason was given for the cancellation of the loan, which was part of the P1-billion budget for the repair of the Halsema Highway, a major road artery in the region, William Balajo, chief of the construction division of DPWH-CAR, said.

This means that local agencies would have to shoulder the expenses for the repairs, the second phase of Halsema Highway's rehabilitation from Mt. Data in Bauko to Bontoc, the capital of Mt. Province, Balajo said.

Phases II and III of the Halsema rehabilitation project from Mt. Data to Bontoc and from Bontoc to Banaue were supposed to be part of the DPWH's national road improvement program funded by a World Bank loan.

The project was scheduled to be completed this year.

The first phase covered the completion of the highway's section from Baguio City to Buguias, Benguet, while the third phase would cover the Bontoc to Banaue section of the highway.

Allocations

Earlier, President Macapagal-Arroyo allotted another P150 million for the rehabilitation of the highway which would add to the P100 million that was earlier set aside by the DPWH.

Both funds will be released this year, according to Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dalog.

Dalog said Ms Arroyo emphasized during her visit to Mt. Province last week that the concreting of the highway should be given priority this year to hasten the economic development of the region.

Local officials also wanted to transform Mt. Province into a prime tourist destination.

"We want our roads to be concreted because we want to develop our economy. We have always been (relegated) to one of the poorest provinces," Dalog said.

"The President emphasized the concreting of the highway as her real priority. During the briefing, I [stressed] that the concreting of the road was very important," Dalog earlier said.

Feud on funds

Dalog said the World Bank earlier released P700 million for the road project and the funds authorized by Ms Arroyo to be released next year would help hasten the project's completion.

Dalog and Mt. Province Rep. Victor Dominguez differed on how the P100 million earlier set aside for the project would be used.

Dominguez said the amount should be used for the widening of sections of the highway and for the installation of guardrail, which he said followed the DPWH's original program of work.

The feud was cut short when Ms Arroyo paid a visit to the area.

The President spent her holidays in Baguio City at The Mansion, the official residence of the President in the summer capital. *Desiree Caluza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Bong Pineda wife to antijueteng bishop: Spare me

BOARD MEMBER Lilia Pineda appears serious in her campaign to wrest the Pampanga governorship from actor Mark Lapid, but has to confront issues on her husband's alleged jueteng connections.
TONETTE OREJAS,INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—PAMPANGA Board Member Lilia Pineda urged Archbishop Oscar Cruz to spare her from his group's campaign against pro-jueteng candidates in the May elections.

She said her running for governor was not the making of her husband, suspected jueteng lord Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda, but by the need to end the "poor leadership" of Gov. Mark Lapid.

"With due respect to Archbishop Cruz and as a Catholic, I begged (for) his understanding. My running is not dictated by my husband or by my own ambition. I am part of a good cause, that is to serve the Kapampangans who have been neglected by Governor Lapid," she told the INQUIRER by phone on Wednesday.

Pineda made the statement in reaction to an announcement by Cruz that his group, the Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng, would campaign against candidates benefiting from or running the illegal numbers game.

To this, the board member said: "I know my husband has been controversial. He deals with his own issues. I have a mind of my own."

Asked if her husband was funding her campaign, she said: "He should help me. He has a good heart. He should not just watch while our provincemates suffer."

Alternative

Interviewed last Sunday after he came up on stage to endorse his wife's plan to run for governor to some 7,000 leaders from the Lapids' hometown of Porac, Bong Pineda said he saw no need to spend much on his wife's campaign because she is seen as an "acceptable alternative" to the incumbent.

Bong Pineda also warned Governor Lapid and his father, Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid, not to use the jueteng issue against his wife.

The Lapids have not raised the issue even as Board Member Pineda and her allies among mayors have harped on the alleged quarry scam.

In August 2005, Bong Pineda was not called to appear in the Senate investigation on jueteng because Senator Lapid reportedly blocked such a plan.

In recent weeks, the Lapids have held their silence but vowed to deal head on with Lilia Pineda during the actual campaign period. "I will just work," Governor Lapid said, as quoted by his campaign manager, Fidel Arcenas.

Board Member Pineda said she was willing to step out of the race if Cruz could suggest and back up a leader who could defeat the governor.

Mayors' choice

At least 17 mayors, who broke alliance with the Lapids and moved to the Kabalikat ng Mamamayang Pilipino (Kampi), the original political party of President Macapagal-Arroyo, had pushed Lilia Pineda to run because "no one at the moment has the resolve, resources and popularity to fight the Lapids," according to Bacolor Mayor Romeo Dunca, vice chair of the Pampanga Mayors League.

Lilia Pineda said Cruz should also consider the fact that she has held public office for 19 years. She served four years as councilor in Lubao town, nine years as mayor also in Lubao, and five years as board member.

These stints, she said, gave her training and experience in governance. "I did executive and legislative tasks. I did not just sprout now," she said. *Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

Cop, son of gov, held for firing gun on Christmas Eve

BAGUIO CITY—POLICE HAVE detained a rookie police officer, a son of Kalinga Gov. Dominador Belac Sr., for allegedly firing his service pistol on Christmas Eve.

A Baguio resident claimed that PO1 Dominador Belac Jr. emptied his pistol in the air, inside a heavily populated neighborhood while families there celebrated Christmas.

Belac, a fresh graduate of a local police academy, lives in the city although he is assigned temporarily to the La Trinidad police office in Benguet.

Senior Supt. Moises Guevara, Baguio police director, said he recommended Belac's dismissal "because there is enough evidence to convict him."

Director General Oscar Calderon, Philippine National Police chief, was in the city when he received news about the young Belac. Calderon told reporters here that Belac has become this year's "poster boy" for errant policemen.

Guevara said police had recovered spent shells belonging to Belac from the neighborhood where the young policeman was supposedly partying with friends.

Belac refused to undergo a mandatory paraffin test upon his lawyer's advice, Guevara said.

But Belac has only been placed on restricted duty at Camp Dangwa in La Trinidad because Chief Supt. Raul Gonzales, Cordillera police director, has ordered a new investigation of his case.

Senior Supt. Joseph Adnol, Cordillera police spokesperson, said Belac is entitled to a hearing and is being investigated by the police internal affairs division and the people's law enforcement board (Pleb).

"There will definitely be no politics [influencing his case]," Adnol said. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

73-yr-old Pampanga New Year tradition waning

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

MINALIN, PAMPANGA—A UNIQUE New Year tradition of merrymaking by men and boys in this town has lived on but signs that it is waning are beginning to show.

On Monday, fewer men wore women's dresses and even fewer staged hilarious acts, making the 73-year-old revelry, so far the only one of its kind in the Philippines, a dull street party.

Revelers, organizers, local officials and old-timers all took note of the low attendance and not-so cheerful mood in this year's *Aguman Sanduk* (Fellowship of the Ladle).

"*Miritak kami* (We turned out to be fewer now)," said Brian Labagis, a 22-year-old construction worker, as he danced on the streets of Sto. Rosario at past 4 p.m.

Labagis could not exactly tell why, but he surmised that some men could be shy in dressing themselves as women.

For his fourth year at this annual parade, he wore a maroon velvet gown, crowned his hair with two big yellow plastic flowers and painted his lips with generous amount of red lipstick.

"We'd like to greet the year with happiness that's why we do this. That's what this tradition aims to do," Labagis said as he and his five buddies gyrated to the tune of "Boom tarat-tarat."

Best of all, he succeeded in amusing his girlfriend who shouted from the roadside: "*Ikaw ba yan* (Is that you)?"

Marianne Rabaria, president of the Parish Pastoral Council, the organizer this year, said fewer men joined although her group went to the town's 15 villages to invite them to join the street party.

"We put up posters, streamers, coordinated with the barangay captains. Perhaps, the older men needed to coax the younger ones to join," Rabaria said.

Mayor Edgardo Flores, one of the old-timers here, said the yearly turnout and how lively the event could get "depended really on the organizers."

This was the first time that the council organized the event, Rabaria said, adding that her group could do better next time. The good thing that happened now is that quite a number of young men, about 300 of them, participated.

The council also managed to provide P4,000 to every participating barangay. "They could put their creativity to work," she said.

Sta. Rita II's float, featuring a fat man in diapers to symbolize the New Year, was the one that drew much of the laughter from the crowd.

Buenaventura Deang, 69, said it was the "spirit of fun" that was actually absent in the event.

"*Enu makatula ing aliwa* (Not all the acts can stir delight)," said Deang who had joined the revelry for more than 10 years.

MEN of Minalin, Pampanga dress up as women in a 72-year-old tradition that is waning because of lack of participation from the town's other men.
TONETTE OREJAS/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
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Disaster volunteers need relief, too

By Gina Rodriguez
Daraga, Albay

"I STILL CANNOT SHAKE OFF the images of the two mothers, who both lost their husbands and a child but did not have the time to grieve as they also had to run for their lives," said Fr. Jovic Lobrigo, who was among the people helping in rehabilitation work in Albay after Supertyphoon "Reming" struck the province last Nov. 30.

'Even if you have 100 priests around, just about everyone was overburdened and it was not possible to step back and help others process the experience'

Lobrigo, who has been the parish priest of Daraga town for over a year, is one of the three coordinators of the secretariat for government organizations and nongovernment organizations (GO-NGO) involved in the rehabilitation of typhoon survivors. The coordinating body is the most positive thing that emerged from the destruction, he said.

As representative of the local NGO community, Lobrigo has been keeping close communication with Mac Pavia of the Provincial Planning and Development Office, who represents the local government, and Dr. Mel Capistrano, resident manager of Oxfam-Britain, who represents the international NGO community in the secretariat.

The priest recounted the haunting images of the two mothers, who were among the more than 1,000 people of Daraga huddled in the centuries-old parish church at the height of "Reming." One lost her husband and a child while the other, who was cradling her 2-month-old child, was searching for her husband.

The trauma was most felt during the first three days after the typhoon, when cut power and communication lines isolated the Albayanos from the rest of the country.

"On Day Two, I was overwhelmed when I left the church and moved around town only to find myself stranded in Barangays Cullat, Binitayan, Sangandaan and Tagas," he said.

The priest admitted to "breaking. down" during the Sunday Mass he celebrated in the morning after Reming struck. He felt at a loss as to how he could communicate with people in distress and told himself: "You're left with nothing and all you could hold on to is God."

Volunteers

What eased the burden was the support from various sectors, including the manpower provided by other local governments and national and local government agencies.

A MAN starts rebuilding his home in Barangay Maipon, Guinobatan, Albay, one of the areas most affected by mudflow caused by Supertyphoon "Reming."

NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

The Metro Manila Development Authority provided personnel for the construction of temporary shelters and helped clear major roads.

Electric cooperatives from the Visayas and Northern Luzon sent 175 people to share their expertise in power restoration.

"It was pleasant to know that local and international NGOs have been patient in understanding the bureaucratic gaps that come with working with the government," said Lobrigo.

The volunteers included professionals, college students and even high school students from private universities in Metro Manila.

Aside from the 300 volunteers of the Social Action Center (SAC) of the Diocese of Legazpi, 50 people arrived in two batches for three-to-four day visits, to conduct psychosocial therapy to help survivors in the five hard-hit municipalities and city cope with the trauma of suddenly losing their loved ones and property.

One of the SAC volunteers, Marex Orendain, of Maipon, Guinobatan, who manages the center's microfinance unit, lost his new house to rampaging floodwaters. His wife and their child held on to a piece of wood until the waters subsided.

"Immediately after ensuring his family's safety, Marex left his family to the care of his parents and resumed his duties attending to the needs of the other victims," said Lobrigo.

And who would come to "de-stress" the field workers themselves, who were religiously attending to the varying needs of the terribly shaken survivors?

Over two weeks into relief and rehabilitation work, about 150 SAC volunteers expressed the need for "psychosocial rejuvenation."

"Even if you have 100 priests around, just about everyone was overburdened and it was not possible to step back and help others process the experience," said the priest.

Like prayers answered, however, Fr. Mimo Perez appeared at the doorsteps of the Daraga Church after driving all the way from Tagaytay City in Cavite.

Resiliency

Perez said he had asked for permission from his bishop in the Diocese of Calapan in Oriental Mindoro, where he is assigned, so he could be of help in Bicol.

"I have no goods to give but consider me as a human relief," he said.

On Dec. 21, he conducted a recollection session among the field workers, one of whom responded that the process reenergized him to move forward in relief and rehabilitation work.

"It lightens and relieves the spirit," the participant said.

The "load" felt by the local volunteers, however, was not visible to the foreigners who came to help.

An Oxfam volunteer, who was involved in relief operations in Aceh, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, observed how it was quite easy for Albay folk to accept the tragedy and be resilient in the face of so much loss.

The secretariat has identified three critical areas of concern in the ongoing relief and rehabilitation work. One area was children's education. Classes are set to resume this week but around 80 percent of school buildings have been damaged.

Another is the need for emergency food provisions, especially for most families whose farms were ravaged by the typhoon, and supplemental feeding for children and mothers who breast-feed.

The third area is the need for 10,000 shelters for an equal number of families in relocation sites, especially those living in high-risk places.

Albay has been unique in that the recent calamity fostered close collaboration among national agencies, local governments, international and local NGOs and the Church.

"It was the best thing that ever happened in Albay," said Lobrigo.

Young filmmakers in Southern Tagalog take alternative path

By Niña Catherine Calleja
Los Baños, Laguna

FOR MANY YOUNG FILMMAKERS who strive to be part of the industry mainstream and draw more money and prestige, alternative cinema may not be a dream. Artists of the Southern Tagalog Exposure (STEX), however, are promoting the medium to "advance the interest of the marginalized sectors."

For six years, STEX, a nonstock and nonprofit group of six young filmmakers, has been exploring film, audiovisual and print media. It has produced seven documentary, experimental, and music videos, as well as a quarterly magazine called the ST Exposure.

According to one of its members, RJ Mabilin, the group's works usually talk about the "suffering and the struggle of the basic sectors—the poor farmers, the workers, and the urban poor."

"The films we create are alternative because of the content and these always challenge the status quo," he says. "We see that something is wrong in our society and we help expose it through different art forms."

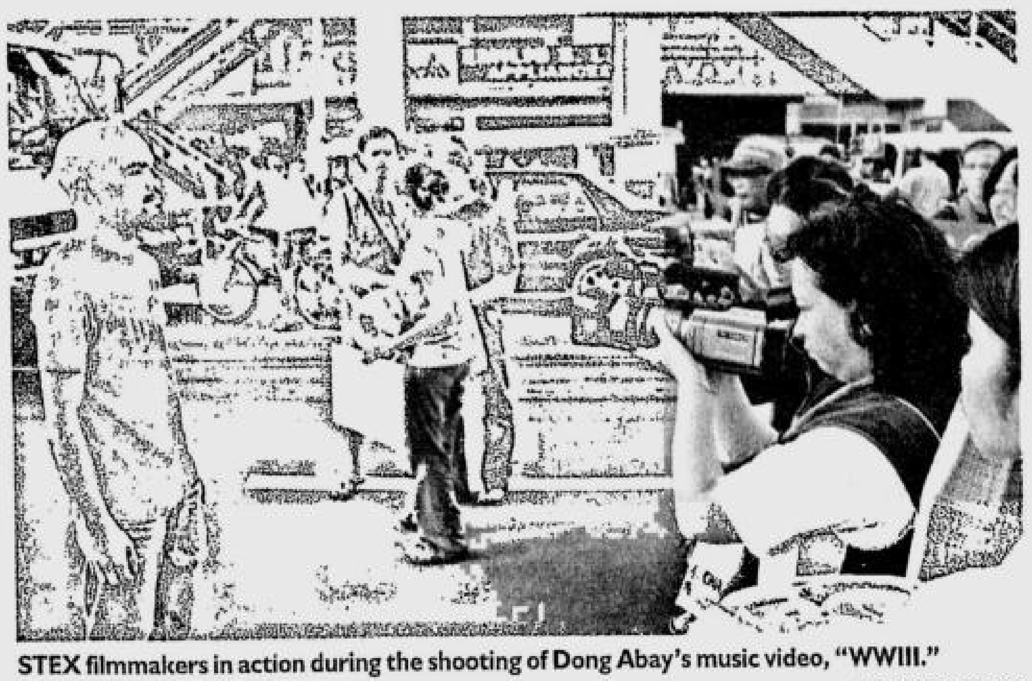
The other members are King Catoy, Gabriela Krista Dalena, Teta Tulay, Bong de Leon, and Con Cabrera. Their ages range from late 20s to early 30s.

Alternative discourse

Mabilin notes that the current popular films are narratives made Hollywood-style and primarily aim to entertain the public and earn hefty profits. Many popular movies are escapists and mouthpieces of the existing system, he says.

"Our task is to expose and oppose the injustices happening in the country that generally filmmakers in the mainstream don't do," he says.

In breaking away from the conventional Hollywood cinema, STEX delves into the alternative content, form and aesthetics of films. "That is why we are doing documentaries and experimental films," Mabilin says.



STEX filmmakers in action during the shooting of Dong Abay's music video, "WWIII."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

STEX was formed by four student activists from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in 2001. They were volunteers of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan in Southern Tagalog (Bayan-ST), whose main assignment was to document activities and protest actions in the region.

"Those students have background and interests in art and filmmaking. Because they are activists, they see that films, like any other art forms, can be instrumental to change," Mabilin says.

"Eventually, we decided to form a separate group," he says.

STEX started to create a short film that featured political killings and human rights abuses committed against civilians in Mindoro, Quezon, Batangas, and Laguna. It did not intend to produce a film back then, Mabilin says.

With their SLRs and video cameras, the artists joined and documented nearly 50 fact-finding missions led by the human rights group Karapatan.

In 2002, they decided to merge all their video clips into one short documentary film titled "Alingawngaw ng mga Punglo" (Echo of Bullets).

"We felt the need to produce that film because human rights abuses were already alarming," he said

Awarded short films

The film won second place in the video documentary category of the 16th Gawad CCP (Cultural Center of the Philippines) for Alternative Film and Video.

In the succeeding years, STEX produced "Ang Kaaway" (The Enemy), a discussion of "US intervention in the country"; "There is Blood in your Coffee," a 30-minute video presentation of the dispersal of the Nestlé union picket; "On Potok," a music video of the displacement of the Dumagat indigenous people in Rizal; and "Red Saga," a poetic short film about armed conflict in the region.

"On Potok" garnered second place in the experimental video category of the 16th Gawad CCP for Alternative Film and Video.

"Red Saga," on the other hand, won in Kodak Philippines' film school competition and in the experimental category of the 18th Gawad CCP for Alternative Film and Video. It was first runner-up in Kodak Asia-Pacific Regional Competition.

"In Red Saga, we used unconventional film techniques, editing, and cinematography. There were no dialogues but the images in the 16-minute film sent its message to the audience," says Mabilin.

Last year, STEX convened the Arrest Gloria (Alliance of Artists for the Removal of Arroyo).

With the participation of artists like Lourd de Veyra of the Radioactive Sago Project and Bobby Balingit of the Wuds, STEX and the Arrest Gloria produced a video titled "Tuparin Natin ang Banta ng ating Panahon." The video won second place in the animation category of the 18th Gawad CCP for Alternative Film and Video in 2006.

STEX also produced a video of Dong Abay's song, "WWIII," which was launched last Dec. 8 in a concert to celebrate International Human Rights Day.

Mabilin says the group presents film shows ("Sinengbayan" or People's films) in communities, universities and in streets during protest rallies.

Threats

Although STEX has established its reputation in the field of alternative cinema, Mabilin says its members are not exempted from harassment.

In April last year, De Leon and Tulay were arrested and detained by the military while covering a fact-finding mission in Quezon province.

In 2004, Melvin Mamis, a correspondent of STEX, was assaulted by soldiers, Mabilin says. "The military confiscated a video camera and up to now, it has not yet been returned."

Also, Mabilin recounts how a policeman hit him and his camera with a truncheon during a rally.

"There are a lot of cases of harassment against us. They (soldiers) are doing that because they are being criticized in our films," he says.

STEX artists have never been considered part of media by the military, Mabilin says.

Despite the threats and the little money derived from alternative cinema, he says, "we are determined to create more uncompromising films that would air the people's voice."

Case vs suspects in militant's murder junked

By Chito A. Fuentes
Inquirer Visayas

TAGBILARAN CITY—THE PROVINCIAL prosecutor's office has dismissed the charges filed against four suspects in the murder of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) provincial chair Victor Olayvar on Sept. 13 last year.

Third assistant provincial prosecutor Eric Ucat found the evidence "inadequate" to link all four to Olayvar's killing.

The resolution, dated Dec. 4, 2006, has been approved by Provincial Prosecutor Toribio Quiwag and released Tuesday by his office.

Supt. Clarito Baja, Task Force Olayvar leader, had earlier filed the murder charges against brothers Marlou and Virgo Betasa, Neil Logrono and Roldan Torres after they were implicated by *habal-habal* (motorcycle-for-hire) driver Joselito Ayag.

Ayag, who drove the motorcycle bearing Olayvar when he was murdered in Barangay Cantubod, Danao town, implicated the four in a supplemental affidavit he executed last Oct. 2.

Not reliable

The prosecutor's office resolution noted that while the identification by an eyewitness constituted vital evidence, it was "not always reliable."

Ucat said that after Olayvar was shot and killed, Ayag reported the incident to Danao police but "did not bother to give even a slightest description of the assailants."

"All he was able to muster was that Victor was shot by two unidentified persons," the resolution said.

In his Sept. 8, 2006 affidavit, Ayag said that "if ever, the gunmen will be presented to me for identification, I can easily recognize them through their faces, body builds (sic) and height."

Fear

Although the respondents were not presented personally to Ayag, Ucat noted that Ayag later identified them as the gunmen.

The resolution pointed out that during clarificatory questioning, Ayag declared that "out of fear, he vehemently declined" to describe the assailants to the police sketch artist.

Ucat described the manner in which the Betasa brothers and Logrono were identified as "highly irregular and inherently unreliable," and "very strange and disturbing."

He noted that while Ayag refused to give the individual descriptions of the assailants, he told police investigators "surprisingly, if not mysteriously" when confronted with a picture and three sketches that "they were the gunmen."

The resolution also said that Torres could not be criminally charged with murder because there was "no showing in the record" that he knew of the killing and cooperated with the assailants in "previous, simultaneous or subsequent acts."

A CROWD gathers around President Macapagal-Arroyo as residents of Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya awaited her arrival for the opening of a 104-km, P2.5-billion road project that would make land travel between Nueva Vizcaya and Baguio faster. BEN MOSES EBREO/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Gloria unveils ₱858-M Vizcaya road project

KAYAPA, NUEVA VIZCAYA—ON the first working day of the year on Tuesday, an upbeat President Macapagal-Arroyo took time out to mingle with officials and residents here as she led the unveiling of the P858-million section of the Nueva Vizcaya-Benguet Road.

The supposed 15-minute event took longer than expected as Ms Arroyo, who came from the First Family's Christmas and New Year holidays in Baguio City, greeted residents and reminded them of the newly completed project.

"You now have a very beautiful road," she told well-wishers who had lined up for handshakes after the inauguration of the 174-meter bridge in Pingkian Village here.

The residents, beaming, responded with, "Yes, ma'am, and we thank you."

Ms Arroyo unveiled the second of two packages of the P2.5-billion rehabilitation of the Baguio-Aritao road improvement project, funded through a loan with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and a counterpart from the government.

"I am happy to be back in Kayapa because I remember the trip that I had back here when I was still a senator, then earlier, the trip that I had with my father and mother when the road coming here was still very, very difficult," Ms Arroyo said.

30 years in waiting

"Today, the road that took you 30 years waiting is finally completed. This is one of the super region roads that I was talking about during my [State of the Nation Address]," she told a crowd of about 1,000 people here.

Contract Package II of the project included the widening and concreting of more than 35 km of mountain road from Kirang Village in Aritao town to the Nueva Vizcaya-Benguet border in Pangawan Village here.

It also included the construction of the Pingkian, Odon and Kayapa bridges with a total length of 248 meters.

Public works officials said when completed, the Baguio-Aritao project would cut travel time from Cagayan Valley to Baguio City and Benguet by two hours.

"This is what we need, a road that goes from Cagayan Valley to Cordillera, in order for us to realize our vision of North Luzon as an agribusiness super region," Ms Arroyo said.

"I am very sure that this project will bring greater development for Cagayan Valley since [the farmers'] products will be easily brought to the market."

Contract Package I, which is 65-percent complete, is expected to be finished in October, with construction work in full swing at the remaining Ambuklao portion, Ms Arroyo added.

She also announced the scheduled rehabilitation of the airport in Bagabag town, which, she said, is expected to boost tourist arrivals in nearby Ifugao.

Obstacles

Officials of the China-Geo Engineering Corp., the project contractor, expressed relief that the project has surpassed the obstacles that earlier threatened it, including the opposition from local villagers over claims on their lands that were traversed by the road project.

"It was really difficult at first. There were even instances that our personnel were chased by residents with bolos. But we've managed to settle these problems with the help of local officials and the DPWH. We're glad the project is finally completed," said Marilou Chan, China-Geo administrative officer.

She, however, said the project remains embroiled in a controversy over the alleged failure of a private subcontractor to pay quarry taxes with the provincial government for sand and gravel extracted from the Pingkian riverbed for the road construction.

In Nueva Ecija, Ms Arroyo inaugurated the completed canals and structures of the Casecnan Multipurpose Irrigation and Power Project (CMIPP) in the Science City of Muñoz.

"Starting today, some 10,000 hectares of rice land in this city and part of Guimba town will be irrigated. After this, some 16,000 hectares more in other parts of Nueva Ecija and Victoria, Tarlac will be irrigated," she told more than 1,500 farmers and officials who attended the event.

The President delivered a speech atop a *kuliglig* (hand tractor-drawn vehicle).

"This irrigation project here is very meaningful because this will make sure the increase in rice production and make Nueva Ecija maintain its status as a premiere rice-producing province," she said. *Melvin Gascon and Ben Moses Ebreo, Inquirer Northern Luzon, and Anselmo Roque, Inquirer Central Luzon*

Bayan Muna leaders say attacks won't defeat group in polls

LEGAZPI CITY—THE LEFT-WING party-list group Bayan Muna said it would emerge as the top winner in the May elections for party-list representatives despite attacks on its leaders.

Robert de Castro, national deputy secretary general of Bayan Muna, said that while the group expected more attacks on its leaders and members, it was not backing down from a campaign to emerge as the top party-list group in the elections.

The latest Bayan Muna leader to have been murdered was Rodolfo Alvarado, the group's Albay coordinator.

Alvarado, 53, the 42nd political activist to be murdered in Bicol last year, was shot dead Sunday while aboard his car on his way home to Barangay San Lorenzo in Ligao City at around 5 p.m.

"If we no longer fight in the elections, it is the time the government should start to fear because we can never stop our members, agitated by the killings, from fighting back against the government in other ways," he said.

Suspect

Senior Supt. Roque Ramirez, provincial police director, said Tuesday that a witness in the murder of Alvarado was now in police custody and that a police task force had been created to thoroughly probe the killing.

He said the witness saw the suspect who shot Alvarado in Ligao late Sunday afternoon.

However, De Castro said they had always doubted the government's sincerity in its efforts to solve the killings and serve justice to the families of the victims.

"All of these are but pretensions," he charged.

He added that in other cases of killings, witnesses emerged "but where would their testimonies go and would the government be able to provide security for them since they had also become targets of slays?"

"The government will again end up diverting the issue by saying the victims were slain by fellow activists or by members of the New People's Army because of internal conflicts," he said.

What's going on?

"What's going on?" Gov. Fernando Gonzalez said as he condemned the killing of Alvarado, which he said was a manifestation of the violent acts against leaders of legitimate party-list groups.

The provincial government was "very much concerned" about the killing, said Gonzalez.

He asked the PNP and the Melo Commission, which was formed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to look into leftist killings, to solve Alvarado's case immediately.

But De Castro said the Melo Commission was powerless.

"We fear Ompong's (Alvarado) case would a be part of the police data and end up unresolved," he added.

Not more than 100 people attended the indignation rally held by Bayan Muna here, but De Castro said a major protest march was planned on Alvarado's burial. *Ephraim Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Chavit says pols riding on clamor to free Erap

ILOCOS SUR GOV. LUIS "CHAVIT" Singson yesterday joined calls for unity and reconciliation with the camp of his former friend, deposed President Joseph Estrada but said it should not be made at the price of Estrada's release.

In a statement, Singson said he supports the call for reconciliation made by El Shaddai leader Mike Velarde.

But he criticized the proposed Covenant of Unity made by Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza because it was anchored on the early release of Estrada from jail.

In his statement, he said the claim made by some sectors that reconciliation and unity could be achieved only with Estrada's release was "too simplistic and shows poor logic."

"Brother Mike seems to know the law better than Mayor Atienza and some politicians who are out to gain people's support by espousing popular causes," said Singson's statement.

"Estrada's plunder case is not a major factor that is obstructing our efforts to move on," he said.

"Mayor Atienza should stop playing politics on both sides of the political fence," he added.

'Happy teachers' seen key to happy year

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—DEPENDING ON who you ask, Filipinos are either one of the world's most pessimistic people or merely hidden optimists especially about the new year.

But an educator here believed that the secret to a happy new year is happy teachers.

Dr. Henry Tenedero, who heads the Center for Learning and Teaching Styles Inc. (CLTS) here, said he would bring a well-known Danish educator early this year to teach Filipino teachers, including entrepreneurs, how to be happy and effective.

"The Danes are the happiest people in the world so they might be doing something right," said Tenedero.

Tenedero is bringing Hans Henrik Knoop of the Danish University of Education for a lecture tour in Metro Manila and Northern Luzon from Feb. 13 to 17.

Together with Howard Gardner of Harvard University and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi of Claremont Graduate University, Knoop launched the GoodWork Project, a program looking for individuals and institutions that exemplify "good work" or work that is excellent in quality, socially responsible and meaningful to its practitioners.

Knoop is also famous for emphasizing the degree of happiness in education. His 2004 book's title said it all—"Why Happy Children are Better Learners."

Tenedero said Filipinos are intrinsically optimistic but they lack focus in what they really wanted.

"We really should come up with tangible and highly visible positive projects for the next year," he said.

He was referring to the Gallup International Voice of the People survey that said Filipinos again think that 2007 would not be as good as 2006.

More than a third (34 percent) of Filipinos said "worse" to the question, "So far as you are concerned, do you think that 2007 will be better or worse than 2006?"

According to the study that involved 56 countries, Filipinos are more pessimistic than Indonesians and Indians and slightly less pessimistic than Bosnians, Portuguese and Italians. The Greeks are the most pessimistic with 44 percent saying 2007 would be worse than 2006.

Last year, half of Filipinos surveyed said 2006 would be worse than 2005, making them the most pessimistic people in the world. For the past two years, Vietnam was the most optimistic with nine out of 10 saying 2007 would be better than 2006.

But Tenedero said Filipinos still have hope.

Tenedero said Adrian White of the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom asked 80,000 people worldwide and came out with the global projection of subjective well-being (SWB). Happiness and satisfaction with one's life were among the measures of the SWB, according to White.

The Philippines ranked 79th to 81st among 178 countries included in the survey.

Denmark, on the other hand, topped the list, followed by Switzerland, Austria, Iceland, and the Bahamas.

WIRED TO THE INTERNET The Baler National High School and Aurora National Science High School, two of the best public high schools in Aurora province, are now wired to the Internet courtesy of the Smart Schools Program of Smart Communications Inc. Aurora Gov. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo (right) cuts the ribbon with Smart's Darwin Flores. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Mid-Day **SUERTRES** Evening

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SPORTS

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Late Sports

PUREFOODS' Mark Pingris cuts through the Sta. Lucia defense in their PBA game last night at the Cuneta Astrodome. ERIK ARAZAS

Giants rout Realtors, gain last q'finals slot

By Musong R. Castillo

FROM A TEAM SO BAD TO end up so good and from one so flawless to finish so flawed.

Such were the sudden change in forms in Purefoods' 92-78 victory over Sta. Lucia in their Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup KO match last night that saw the Chunkee Giants barge into the quarterfinals and the Realtors drop to a place they never thought they would be.

Kerby Raymundo and Marc Pingris stood at the forefront of a dizzying second half fightback by the defending champion Giants, who overhauled a 17-point second quarter deficit to win with plenty to spare.

GAMES TOMORROW *(Araneta Coliseum)*
4:35 p.m.—Alaska vs Coca-Cola
7:20 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs Air21

Purefoods thus joined Red Bull and Talk 'N Text in the quarterfinals, while the Realtors, after playing splendidly in the first 24 minutes, ended up in the wild-card phase, no thanks to a nervous, hesitant second-half performance.

Both the Giants and the Realtors finished the elimination round with 10-8 cards and fought for the third quarterfinal berth—the No. 5 ranking overall—in the only game scheduled at the Cuneta Astrodome.

And the way the Realtors lost dramatized—in glaring detail—their performance up to this point in the tournament, where they paced the field for most part only to sputter in the most critical times.

So horrid were the Realtors that they committed seven turnovers in the first eight minutes of the fourth quarter to find themselves trailing by 17, after taking the same lead on two occasions in the second period, 36-19 and 39-22, after back-to-back Mark Isip baskets.

Sta. Lucia opened a 45-33 lead after two quarters with just six turnovers in the first half.

Raymundo and Pingris each scored 10 points in the third period, which ended with the Giants erasing a 33-45 halftime deficit to take a 63-60 lead into the payoff frame.

Raymundo finished with 25 points and snared 15 rebounds to earn Player of the Game honors, while Pingris wound up with 20 and nine boards.

Rookie Kelly Williams led Sta. Lucia with 17 and Alex Cabagnot added 13.

Sister teams Barangay Ginebra and San Miguel, which finished 1-2 in the elims after ending up with 13-5 records, are already in the semis and will not see action at least for another two weeks.

Wildcard action, where records of all four teams are carried over, starts tomorrow at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao with Alaska going into the round as the No. 2 team behind the Realtors with its 8-10 card.

Air21 is at 7-11 and Coca-Cola 5-13, their chances of nailing the fourth quarterfinal berth hinged on a sweep of the round for a playoff with the No. 1 team.

Only Welcoat, the league newcomer, was eliminated after the Dragons lost their last nine games and wound up with a 3-15 record in their maiden tournament.

The scores:

PUREFOODs 92—Raymundo 25, Pingris 20, J. Yap 11, R. Yap 10, Simon 9, Artadi 5, Salvador 4, Evangelista 4, Limpot 2, Castillo 2, Yee 0.

STA. LUCIA 78—Williams 17, Cabagnot 13, Mendoza 11, Aquino 10, Isip 9, Espino 7, Omolon 6, Bughao 2, Gonzales 2, Catli 1, Calimag 0, Duremdes 0.

Quarters: 16-23, 33-45, 63-60, 92-78.

More Sports stories on A21 to A24

Suns shine

CHICAGO—LEANDRO BARBOSA SCORED 20 points, including a 3-pointer with less than two seconds left, to help Phoenix to a 97-96 National Basketball Association victory over the Chicago Bulls Tuesday.

Amare Stoudamire scored 24 points and grabbed a season-high 18 rebounds and Shawn Marion added 22 points for the Suns, who are 13-1 against Eastern Conference opponents, including 8-0 on the road.

Brazil's Barbosa made 6-of-14 shots for the Suns, who shot just 41 percent from the field, including 7-of-23 from 3-point range. *AFP*

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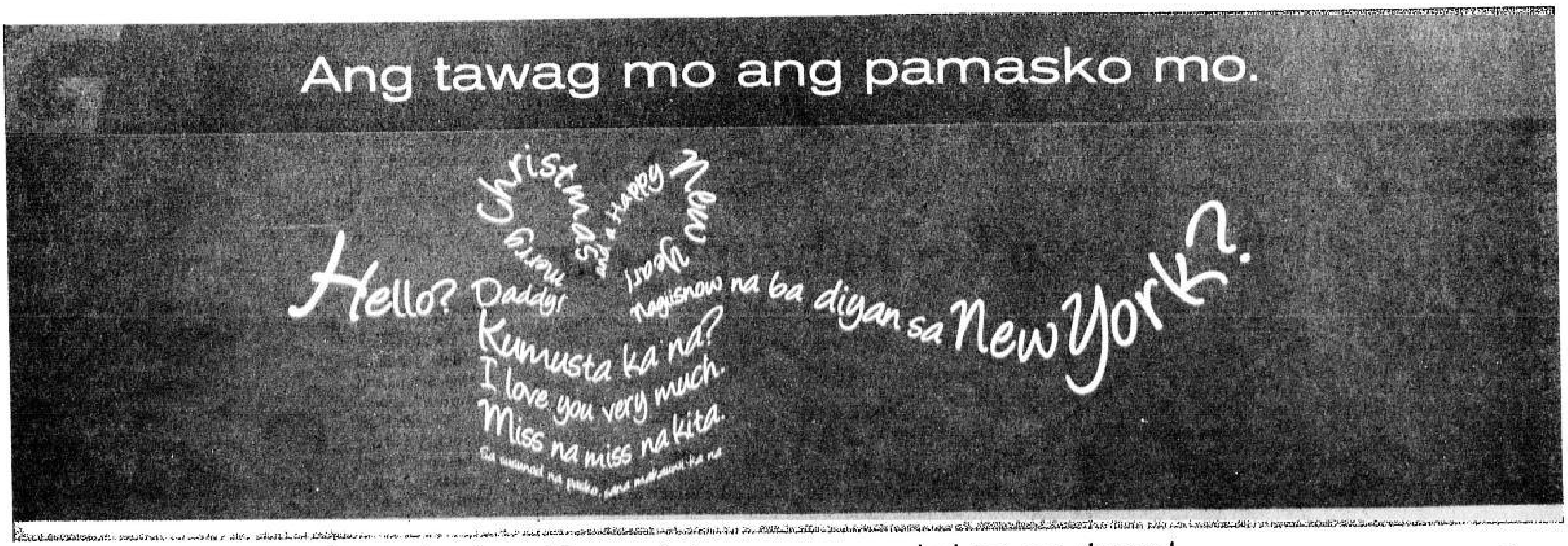
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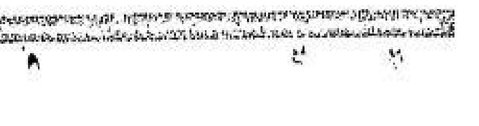

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Tale of two chairs in Pasig barangay

Month-old legitimacy issue has delayed delivery of services, wages

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE DELIVERY OF BASIC SERVICES has been hampered and salaries of employees delayed as the issue on the chairmanship of a Pasig City barangay remains unresolved.

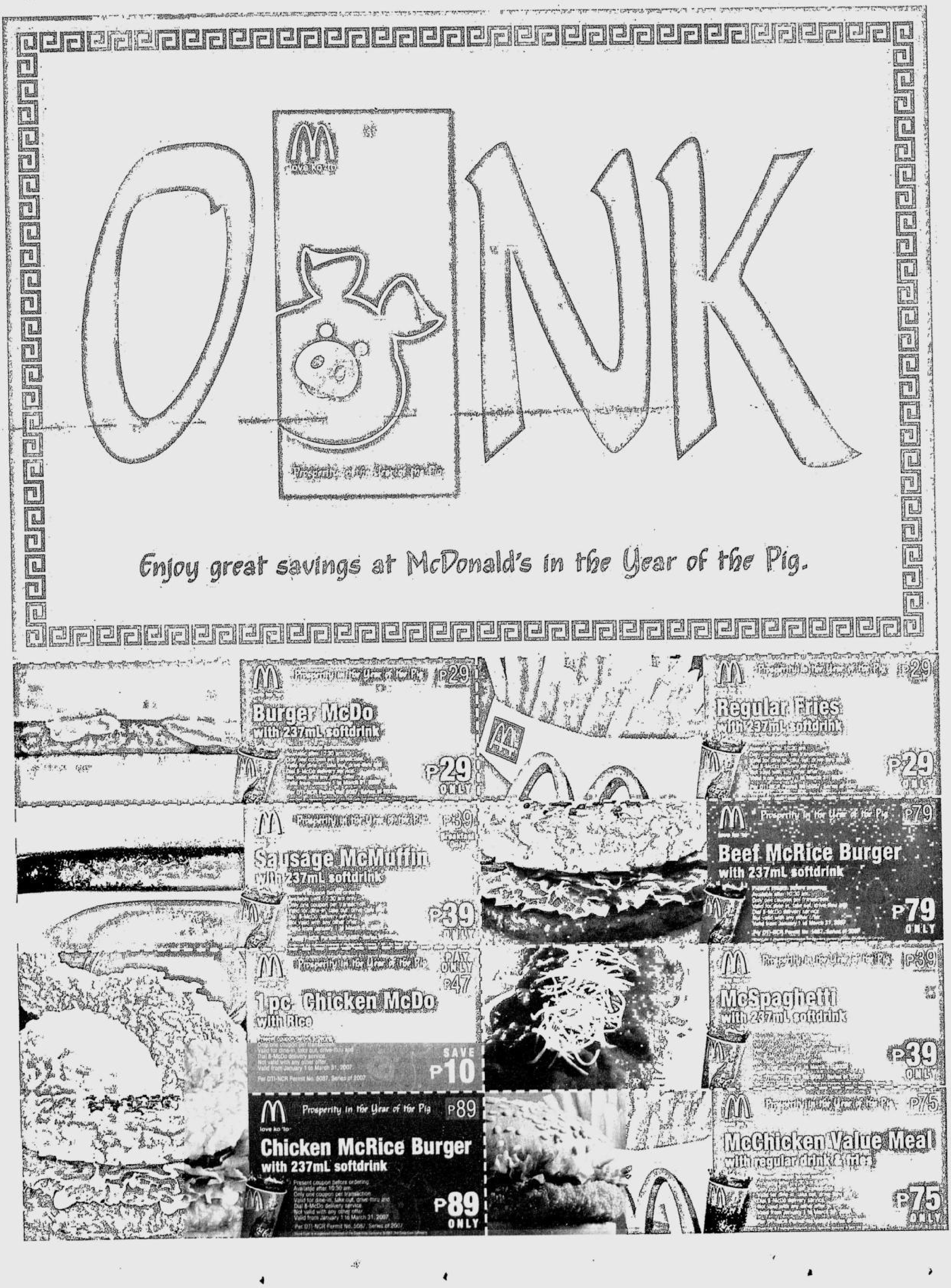
Pasig administrator Reynaldo Dionisio said yesterday the city was recognizing the administration of Fernando Tesorero in Sta. Lucia barangay following an order from the Department of Interior and Local Government and a temporary restraining order from the Court of Appeals. But acting chair Juan Ilagan remained at the barangay hall yesterday, his supporter Ed Gavino said. Tesorero ran as chair and Ilagan as *kagawad* under the administration party.

"The city is duty-bound to follow the TRO," Dionisio told the INQUIRER. He is set to issue a memorandum today to reiterate the stand of City Hall.

The Office of the Ombudsman dismissed Tesorero early in December for alleged grave misconduct and dishonesty. Pasig City Mayor Vicente Eusebio then swore in Ilagan as acting chair. Two weeks later, Tesorero got a temporary restraining order from the Court of Appeals which, he claimed, recognized him as the current chair.

Ilagan refused to accept the TRO and said it was not valid because he had been sworn in. But he also filed a motion asking the court

TALE/A18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1 pc. Chicken McDo
with Rice
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DPWH resumes drive against outdoor ads

HUGE billboards that pose a risk to public safety and property will be torn down again following the resumption of a campaign against violators of safety regulations and the National Building Code. REM ZAMORA

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC Works and Highways will resume its campaign against illegal and hazardous billboards now that the holiday season has ended and the heavy traffic has eased.

It would begin conducting next week an "intensive" inspection of outdoor advertisements and sending out notices to owners of billboards violating the law and posing risks to the public, according to Director Emmanuel Cuntapay of the National Building Code Development Office.

"We will continue our campaign probably by next week when the (Public Works) Secretary (Hermogenes Ebdane) gives the go signal ..." Cuntapay said.

The DPWH halted its drive against giant billboards in December because of the Christmas season and so as not to aggravate the traffic gridlock during the holidays.

Cuntapay said he had begun preparing notices to owners of billboards on private property that would inform them of violations.

He said the DPWH had to follow procedures before it could begin dismantling structures on private property. According to him, the owners had to be given enough time to dismantle the billboards themselves before the DPWH stepped in.

But billboards that blocked right of way could be removed immediately.

The DPWH began its campaign against illegal and dangerous billboards shortly after Typhoon "Milenyo" in late September. Several outdoor advertisements were toppled, causing the death of at least one person.

Backed by a presidential administrative order, the DPWH dismantled billboards blocking right of way, those on public property, those that violated the National Building Code and those that posed a threat to public safety and property.

So far, the DPWH has inspected 13,925 billboards nationwide and dismantled 8,291. In Metro Manila, 2,745 unsafe and illegal billboards had been dismantled.

Withdrawal wins praises for Lacson

By Tina G. Santos

SEN. PANFILO LACSON'S DECISION to withdraw his candidacy for mayor of Manila has been lauded by his potential opponents.

Manila Vice Mayor Danilo Lacuna, who has already announced his bid for the city's top post in the coming elections, claimed that Lacson's exit from the race "was a prudent thing to do."

Lacuna noted that the senator's efforts to win the post might only come to naught if he fails to prove he is a Manila resident.

"Lacson is known to be a native of Cavite," said Lacuna. "His reasons for changing his residency to Manila could be questioned by the Commission on Elections."

Lacuna further said that Lacson's decision to back out of the race to join the senatorial derby would also get support from Manila residents.

Mayor Lito Atienza, whose son Kim is reportedly also in the running for the post, welcomed Lacson's decision. "He (Lacson) would have been a formidable opponent. But acknowledging his legal handicap deserves even more praise," he said.

'Stray bullet incident not an attempt on life of DOJ secretary's son'

By Tina G. Santos

THE ALLEGED SHOOTING INCIDENT at the residence of the son of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez turned out to be simply a case of a stray bullet.

The bullet apparently came from a gun fired indiscriminately during the New Year celebrations.

Agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) were immediately dispatched to the house of Dr. Dennis Gonzalez in Marikina City upon receiving reports that the latter's house was strafed.

But NBI Director Nestor Mantaring quickly dispelled the rumor that it was an attempt on the doctor's life or a threat to his controversial father.

"It appears (to be) a stray bullet. It was already on a downward trajectory when it smashed into the window of the residence," the NBI chief told reporters.

NBI Special Action Unit chief Assistant Regional Director Vicente de Guzman III said they recovered only one bullet in an upstairs bedroom.

De Guzman said the bullet was discovered around 4 p.m. on Jan. 1 by a housemaid.

"It pierced through a window and a maid discovered it when she was cleaning the room," he said. "It appears the bullet was shot in the air, most likely at the height of the New Year celebrations, and was already on a downward trajectory when it hit Dr. Gonzalez's home."

Investigators said the bullet still had enough force to pass through the window but did not even pierce the curtains. It bounced off and fell to the floor.

The bullet was said to have been fired from a .38 revolver, Mantaring said.

"The bullet was taken to the NBI's ballistics laboratory," he said, adding that they're conducting a thorough investigation to determine who in the area owned the firearm used.

Mantaring added that, although the NBI did not consider the incident as an attempt to kill or injure anyone in the house, the shooter could still be held liable for illegal discharge of a firearm.

Police readying cases against Pasig shooters

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FOUR MEN WHO OPENED FIRE at a group holding a New Year street party in a Pasig City barangay were not residents of the area.

A 50-year-old man was killed and nine persons, including two girls, were injured when four men on two motorcycles opened fire at partying residents of Santos Street, Barangay Palatiw, midnight on Sunday.

"We now have leads to identify all of them. We are preparing to file cases against them," city police chief Senior Supt. Francisco Uyami told the INQUIRER.

Some families whose members were injured during the shooting have left to stay temporarily with relatives in nearby barangays.

"They are still afraid because of what happened," Uyami said, adding that the crowded Santos Street remained under close watch by members of the special weapons and tactics team as of yesterday.

TO PREVENT possible retaliatory attacks between warring groups, policemen were deployed to guard Barangay Palatiw in Pasig City. JOAN BONDOC

Dispute

Police theorized the shooting could have been triggered by a dispute between warring groups of residents.

The Sunday attack could also be connected to a stabbing incident weeks ago that killed two men, police added.

The suspects appeared to be relatives of one of the two men who were killed, Uyami said.

In retaliation, the suspects could have fired on the revelers thinking they were relatives and friends of those behind the earlier stabbing incident, Uyami said.

Tale of two chairs in Pasig barangay

From page A17

to lift the TRO.

Dionisio and city legal officer Carlos Abesamis went to the city hall on Tuesday noon to tell Ilagan to recognize the TRO.

The month-old issue remains unresolved with both barangay officials claiming to be the legitimate chair. Last month, their supporters even took turns barricading and occupying the hall.

Ilagan said that because of the standoff, he had to hire volunteers as many barangay employees identified with Tesorero were not reporting for work.

"Tesorero threatened to fire the barangay employees once he is back at his post, if they cooperated with me," Ilagan said.

He said many employees did not receive their salaries last month because of the confusion over who should sign the vouchers.

The other day, the INQUIRER came across two groups of people in the barangay hall.

Tesorero's supporters occupied the health center on the ground floor, surrounded by barangay *tanod* wearing white shirts.

Ilagan and his supporters occupied the office on the upper floor, guarded by barangay *tanod* wearing black shirts.

The *tanod* said they belonged to different groups: Those in white were identified with the Tesorero's camp while those in black were Ilagan's followers.

ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

NOT FOR SALE

A man sells fresh eggs and dried fish on a sidewalk in Ongpin, Binondo. The fire hydrant in the center, however, is not a sale item.

DID YOU KNOW

THE MANUEL L. Quezon University in Manila was founded in 1947 by seven men, including the late Sen. Lorenzo Tañada, who wanted to provide education and professional training to financially disadvantaged young people. The founders were inspired by former President Manuel L. Quezon, who said that education is the right of all citizens.

A building at the corner of Mendiola and Legarda Streets became the MLQU School of Law, which initially admitted 643 students. The school transferred to R. Hidalgo St. and added more academic units. It acquired university status in 1958.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

GMA did the right thing on custody issue

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

IF YOUR BEST FRIEND AND long-time ally comes knocking at your door to ask for a favor, will you refuse him if you have the power to grant his request?

That's what President Macapagal-Arroyo did with Uncle Sam's request for US Marines Lance Cpl. Smith to be turned over to the US Embassy while his conviction is being appealed.

Arroyo used the power of the executive branch of government to transfer custody of Smith to the US Embassy from our correctional system.

Our correctional system, specifically the Bureau of Corrections that would have taken custody of Smith, is under the system.

The secretary of justice, in turn, is a member of the President's Cabinet. And so is the secretary of the interior, who got the convicted American out of the Makati City Jail.

According to my lawyer-friend, Vicente Chuidian, all prisoners—whether detainees awaiting conviction or who have been convicted—may be housed anywhere at the sole and exclusive jurisdiction of the Chief Executive to whom the secretaries of justice and interior report.

Chuidian said it is the courts that decide whether or not a person should go to jail. But where that person should be jailed is the prerogative of the executive department.

"Is it not a fact that the President can even grant amnesty or pardon?" said Chuidian, an expert trial lawyer.

Forget about the President's faults or her legitimacy in office. When she made that controversial decision she had the national interest in mind.

Let's be realistic and practical: We need the Americans more than they need us.

The United States has been giving us more favors that we can return. The United States has been helping us fight the Abu Sayyaf which is backed by the international terrorist group al-Qaida. Abu Sayyaf leaders have been captured or killed one after the other through millions of dollars in reward money put up by the American government. Elite US troops go with Filipino soldiers in hunting down the Abu Sayyaf, although officially both governments won't admit it.

Our military's modernization program hinges on US aid. Our internal and external security depends to a great extent on the Americans.

The favor of taking custody over Smith is small compared to the favors we have been receiving from the Americans.

The favor the US government was asking is in consonance with the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), a treaty, which provides that American servicemen being tried in Philippine courts shall remain in US custody during the judicial proceedings.

The bone of contention is whether "judicial proceedings" ends with Smith's conviction or after the appeal of his conviction is decided by the appellate court.

Anyway, Smith is not scotfree; he's confined in a room at the US Embassy that has been converted into a jail. He is guarded. The only difference is that he's a prisoner on US soil and not in a Philippine prison.

* * *

Ask people who have followed the much-publicized rape case from start to finish, most of them will tell you "Nicole" was never raped.

How could there have been a rape when she willingly took off her tight-fitting jeans? If she was forced into involuntary sex, her pants would have been torn off. There was no way her supposed rapist could have taken off her pants in the cramped space of a moving van without her help. And why did the "rapist" have to wear a condom?

She claims she was too drunk at that time for her to have agreed to have sex with the American. But so was Smith, who is younger than Nicole.

For reactions, please write me at isumbongmokaytulfo@yahoo.com

Bush warns Congress against 'stalemate'

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush, in a column to be published Wednesday, said he was ready to work with Democrats on the eve of their takeover of Congress but warned that partisanship could lead to a "stalemate."

Bush wrote in the Wall Street Journal that winning the war in Iraq and making his tax cuts permanent were the top priorities, two issues in which he has butted heads with Democrats.

"Together, we have a chance to serve the American people by solving the complex problems that many don't expect us to tackle, let alone solve, in the partisan environment of today's Washington," Bush wrote.

"To do that, however, we can't play politics as usual," he said in the column appearing one day before lawmakers take their oaths of office. "Democrats will control the House and Senate, and therefore we share the responsibility for what we achieve."

Bush, whose Republican party's electoral defeat on Nov. 7 was widely attributed to the unpopularity of the Iraq war, said he would soon lay out a new strategy to help the Iraqi government gain full control over its affairs.

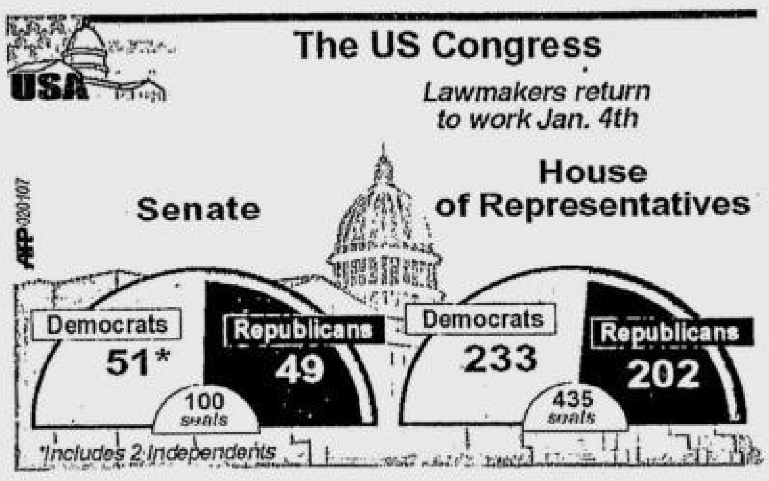
"Leaders in both parties understand the stakes in this struggle. We now have the opportunity to build a bipartisan consensus to fight and win the war," he wrote.

While reaching out to Democrats, Bush also warned that partisan bickering could lead to political deadlock in the final two years of his presidency.

"If the Congress chooses to pass bills that are simply political statements, they will have chosen stalemate," Bush wrote. "If a different approach is taken, the next two years can be fruitful ones for our nation." "We can show the American people that Republicans and Democrats can come together to find ways to help make America a more secure, prosperous and hopeful society," he said.

"And we will show our enemies that the open debate they believe is a fatal weakness is the great strength that has allowed democracies to flourish and succeed."

AFP



WORLDBRIEFS

Peace process

MADRID—In the face of pressure from the conservative opposition, Spain's Socialist government said on Tuesday that the weekend bombing of Madrid airport by Basque separatist group ETA had terminated the nascent peace process. "ETA were the ones who broke off, liquidated, finished the peace process," Interior Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba said following opposition criticism that Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero had initially only talked of "suspending" peace initiatives in the wake of the airport car park blast.

AFP

Gay marriage

BOSTON—Massachusetts lawmakers approved a measure on Tuesday that could give voters a chance next year to ban gay marriage in the only US state where it is legal and overturn a historic ruling by the state's highest court. "We see this as a victory," said Kristian Mineau, president of the Massachusetts Family Institute, a conservative Christian organization. With hundreds of protesters on both sides of the emotionally charged issue chanting slogans outside the gold-domed Statehouse, 61 lawmakers voted to advance the proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage—more than enough needed under state law for such initiatives.

Reuters

Gaza abduction

GAZA CITY—Palestinian security forces in Gaza were searching for AFP photographer Jaime Razuri Tuesday, a day after his abduction, with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas saying he expected a prompt release. "We're sure he will soon be released. In past incidents of this kind, hostages have been freed after one or two days," Abbas told a delegation from AFP, the French consulate and the Peruvian embassy in Tel Aviv at a meeting in his Gaza office. "We are determined to end this affair. It's not the first time that this has happened," Abbas said, adding that he had instructed security officials to work on the release of the Peruvian national.

AFP

Air raid deaths

COLOMBO—At least 15 civilians were killed and dozens more wounded on Tuesday when Sri Lankan air force jets "carpet bombed" territory held by the Tamil Tigers, a pro-rebel website reported. Tamilnet.com said the government raid in Sri Lanka's north against the coastal hamlet of Padahuthurai, near Mannar, left only five out of 25 homes standing. It said at least 15 civilians, including four children, were killed and that a further 30 people were seriously wounded. No independent verification of the toll was available.

AFP

Taliban commander vows bloody 2007 in Afghanistan

SPIN BOLDAK, AFGHANISTAN—THE Taliban will step up attacks on foreign troops in Afghanistan this year and kill anyone who negotiates with the government, a top rebel commander said on Tuesday.

Taliban fighters staged a surprise comeback last year with the bloodiest violence since US-led troops forced them from power in 2001. More than 4,000 people were killed on both sides in 2006 including nearly 170 foreign troops.

Taliban commander Mullah Dadullah said the new year would see more attacks on Nato and US forces.

"Suicide and guerrilla attacks on Nato, American and coalition forces will continue and increase this year. The Taliban will inflict heavy casualties on them," Dadullah told Reuters by satellite telephone from an undisclosed location.

Dadullah did not refer to the death last month of Akhtar Mohammad Osmani, the most senior Taliban commander to be killed by US forces since 2001.

Osmani was killed in a US air strike in the south, and another rebel commander, who declined to be identified, said earlier his death would be a blow to the Taliban.

About 40,000 foreign troops are in Afghanistan, some 32,000 of them under Nato command. They are trying to ensure enough security to enable development projects to get started.

Dadullah said the Taliban had used a winter lull in fighting to draw up new war plans to inflict maximum damage on foreign forces. Afghan fighting traditionally falls off during the bitter winter when snow blocks mountain passes.

"They will soon come to know about the Taliban's strength and war strategy. We will attack with such a force they will have no time to settle," Dadullah said.

The rebel commander ruled out any negotiations while foreign troops were in the country and threatened dire consequences for anyone who did so.

"Those who negotiate in the name of the Taliban will be killed," he said. He did not elaborate.

The government has a reconciliation program aimed at persuading Taliban members to give up their fight and rejoin society but few insurgents have taken up the offer.

Reuters

ENDANGERED BIRD

This undated handout photo provided by Taiwan's Council of Agriculture shows an endangered hawk, Pernis ptilorhynchus, sitting on a tree. The council says there is little knowledge about the bird.

AFP

Germans going 'ga-ga' over new baby subsidy

BERLIN—GERMAN HOSPITALS have seen a surge in the number of planned births this week after a generous government aid program for parents of newborns took effect.

The government, worried about a shrinking population, introduced benefits worth up to 25,200 euros ($33,470) to encourage working couples to have children. But only babies born from Jan. 1 qualify.

"A lot of women who were scheduled for planned deliveries last month asked to postpone till this week," Klaus Vetter, chief doctor at Vivantes hospital in Berlin's Neukoelln district, told Reuters.

"For some, there's a lot of money at stake and they quite reasonably ask: 'if it won't hurt the baby, why not wait?'," he said on Tuesday after performing a Caesarean section. He advised the mother to have the operation a week ago in her 38th week.

"But she wanted to wait. There was a small risk but everything worked out okay. It was a healthy boy." German media have been full of tips on how women could hold off giving birth until Jan. 1—from avoiding physical and sexual activity to taking magnesium and homeopathic medicines.

But medical experts urged pregnant women against medical intervention to delay births, warning of complications and saying it would have only a minimal impact on the timing.

A parent who takes time off from work to care for a newborn can receive two-thirds of their net monthly salary, up to a maximum of 1,800 euros, for 12 months. If the other parent takes a further two months off, the benefit is extended to 14 months.

Germany has a population of 82 million but low birth rates mean average ages are creeping up and seen as one of the factors hampering the development of Europe's largest economy.

"I was thinking 'hold on, hold on, hold on'," said Julia Gotschlich. Her baby Inka Angelina was born at 1 a.m. on Jan 1.

But Jessica Koch, whose baby Nicolas came on Dec. 30, well ahead of schedule, was disappointed she just missed out on the "Elterngeld" (parent money) even though she was relieved her baby was healthy.

"He came five weeks early," Koch told Sat-1 television. She calculated she lost out on 900 euros per month. "I'm sure there will be days I'll think 'Darn, the 900 euros would be handy'." One Munich woman was due to deliver twins on Jan. 22 but her doctor ordered a Caesarean section on Dec. 29—because one of the 41-year-old mother's twin foetuses was having problems.

"It means more than 20,000 euros (lost) to me," Gabriele Meyer told Reuters. The career mother would have got 1,800 euros per month for a child plus 300 euros for the second child.

Reuters

Hajj comes to a close without stampedes that have marred past pilgrimages

JEDDAH—MUSLIM PILGRIMS circled the Kaaba, Islam's holiest site, for a final time Tuesday, bringing to a close what may have been the largest ever hajj pilgrimage, passing without the deadly stampedes that have marred the event in the past.

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims returned to Mecca from a holy site outside the city to perform the "farewell" circling of the Kaaba, a cube-shaped stone structure draped in black cloth that Muslims around the world face during daily prayers.

As they packed up to go, many then plunged into the nearby markets to buy mementos and gifts for people back home.

Tanveer Mustafa, from Britain, bought several jars to fill with water from Zamzam, a holy well nearby the Kaaba. The water is piped to numerous faucets around the Kaaba, where pilgrims crowded to fill cans, bottles and thermoses.

"I have four friends at home who asked me to bring them Zamzam water, so it's a jar for each of them," Mustafa said Monday night, before heading to the nearby city of Jiddah, a departure point for many pilgrims.

Most of the pilgrims did their farewell circuit around the Kaaba on Monday, but many waited until Tuesday to complete to rites.

This year's hajj took place at a time of crises around the Islamic world—particularly in Iraq—and Saudi authorities had warned against any political demonstrations during the five-day pilgrimage. But none took place—even when former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was executed on the third day of the pilgrimage, deeply dividing Arabs. Many Shiites applauded his death, while many Sunni Arabs were angered.

The hajj also passed without a repeat of the deadly stampedes that have plagued the pilgrimage. Last year, 363 people were killed in a crush at the desert plain of Mina, where pilgrims carry out a symbolic stoning of the devil.

Many praised new safety measures taken by Saudi authorities since the stampede. The Mina rites have long been the most dangerous of the hajj, because huge crowds must pass by three stone walls representing Satan and pelt each with pebbles, causing deadly logjams.

The pilgrims move along a long platform where the walls are located. After last year's stampede, the old platform was torn down and replaced by a larger one—a kilometer long and 80 meters wide, with more entrances and exits.

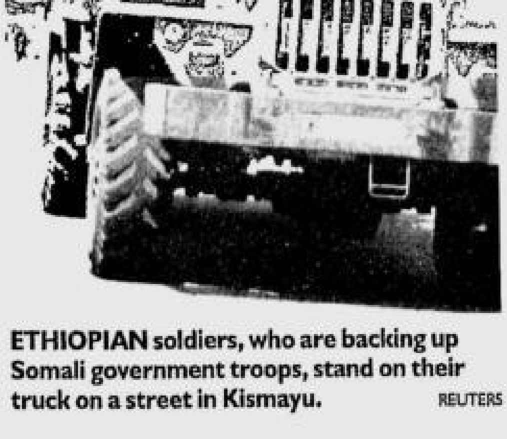
Pilgrims are able to pass over or under the platform to reach the walls—and over the next two years, Saudi authorities plan to build three more levels, allowing five million to perform the rite in one day.

This year's hajj was likely the biggest ever, with authorities estimating that around three million participated.

Saudi Arabia said 1.6 million came from abroad through officially registered tour agencies, a rise of around 14 percent from the previous year.

AP

Ethiopian troops to stay longer in Somalia



ETHIOPIAN soldiers, who are backing up Somali government troops, stand on their truck on a street in Kismayu. REUTERS

MOGADISHU—ETHIOPIA SAID ON Tuesday its troops will stay for another few weeks in Somalia to help the government pacify the Horn of Africa nation, but the Islamists they ousted in a brief war vowed to "rise from the ashes." The Islamists, who fled their last stronghold on Monday after a two-week conflict, said they refused a government offer to surrender and reports of a deadly ambush against Ethiopian forces showed the fighting may be far from over.

A day after Ethiopian troops rolled into the southern town, a resident in Jilib said a Somali gunman shot dead two of their soldiers in the area on Tuesday.

He said Ethiopian forces killed the attacker and, later, two other Somalis. A Somali government source confirmed the ambush but said only one Ethiopian soldier had been killed.

The Islamists did not claim direct responsibility but said such attacks represented a change of tactics.

Analysts say the Islamists, joined by some foreign fighters, may launch an Iraqi-style insurgency against a government they see as propped up by a hated and Christian-led power.

Ethiopian planes, tanks and troops helped the Somali government drive the Islamists from Mogadishu last week, after breaking free from its provincial outpost Baidoa to end six months of Islamist rule across much of southern Somalia.

"If the world thinks we are dead, they should know we are alive. We will rise from the ashes," Islamist spokesperson Abdirahim Ali Mudey told Reuters by phone from a hideout.

"The attack is what we have been promising, as a change of tactic in the fight against the Ethiopians," Mudey said. "We are scattered all over, our troops are almost everywhere." In Addis Ababa, a triumphant Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi—who lauded his troops for turning the war against the Islamists—said his forces would only stay "for a few weeks" while the government pacifies the chaotic nation.

"It is up to the international community to deploy a peacekeeping force in Somalia without delay to avoid a vacuum and the resurgence of extremists and terrorists," Meles said.

In Mogadishu—where the interim government set up gun collection points at the start of a drive to disarm one of the world's most dangerous cities—Somali Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi said Ethiopian troops may in fact stay for months.

"The Ethiopians will leave when they clear terrorists and pacify Somalia. It will be ... weeks and months, not more." The Somali government has called for an African peacekeeping mission—endorsed by the United Nations before the war—to be deployed as soon as possible.

Uganda has provisionally offered a battalion but said on Tuesday it was unwilling to deploy unless its mission and exit strategy were clearly defined. Nigeria may also help.

Gedi said Eritrean, Ethiopian rebels and Arab fighters had been taken prisoner during the clashes in "a clear sign foreign fighters are involved." The government has offered an amnesty to Somali fighters—some of whom it says have been in touch—but insists captured foreigners will face the courts.

It has told Mogadishu residents to hand over their weapons by Thursday or be forcibly disarmed. "There will be no sacred cows," said Information Minister Ali Jama "Jangali." Gedi, who added that Somalia had re-opened its airspace, said many had flocked to collection points, but at one seen by Reuters, not a single gun had been handed in.

Reuters

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Saddam execution nearly halted over jeers

BAGHDAD—A SENIOR IRAQI COURT OFFICIAL nearly halted Saddam Hussein's execution when supporters of a radical Shiite cleric and militia leader taunted the former president as he stood on the gallows.

Prosecutor Munkith al-Faroon, who is heard appealing for order on explicit Internet video of Saturday's hanging that has inflamed sectarian passions, said on Tuesday he threatened to leave if the jeering did not stop—and that would have halted the execution as a prosecution observer must be present by law.

"I threatened to leave," Faroon told Reuters. "They knew that if I left, the execution could not go ahead."

Many in Saddam's Sunni minority, and moderate Shiites and Kurds, have been angered and embarrassed by the video. In it, observers chant "Muqtada, Muqtada, Muqtada!" for Shiite militia leader Muqtada al-Sadr. Saddam by contrast looks dignified on the gallows and replies: "Is this what you call manhood?"

As the Iraqi government mounted an investigation into how officials smuggled in mobile phone cameras, he also challenged the accounts of the justice minister and an adviser to the prime minister who said the film was shot by a guard—Faroon said one of two people taking video was a senior government official.

"Two officials were holding mobile phone cameras," said Faroon, who was a deputy prosecutor in the case for which Saddam was hanged and is the chief prosecutor in a second trial that will continue against his aides for genocide against the Kurds.

"One of them I know. He's a high-ranking government official," Faroon said, declining to name the man. "The other I also know by sight, though not his name. He is also senior.

"I don't know how they got their mobiles in because the Americans took all our phones, even mine which has no camera."

Faroon said he was the only prosecutor from Saddam's trial for crimes against humanity against the people of the Shiite town of Dujail who was present in Baghdad. The Penal Code stipulates that one prosecutor must be present at any execution.

The government released brief silent footage showing only the hangman placing the noose over Saddam's head. The illicit video shows, as well as the taunts, the former president drop through the trap and swing, broken-necked, on the rope.

US forces had kept custody of Saddam since they captured him three years ago, partly over fears about his treatment by the Shiite Muslim majority he oppressed while in power and now the main force in Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government.

Officials, witnesses and journalists attending his trial over the past year were subjected to rigorous background and security checks before entering the court and US troops handed Saddam over to Iraqi guards only at the last moment on Saturday. *Reuters*

AN IRAQI cries on the grave of the country's former President Saddam Hussein in Ouja, 115 km north of Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, Jan. 2. Sunni Muslims, angered by Saddam's execution and the way his hanging was carried out, have taken to the streets in recent days in mainly peaceful demonstrations in Sunni enclaves across the country. AP

Bush set to unveil new Iraq policy

WASHINGTON—US PRESIDENT George W. Bush promised Wednesday to present a new Iraq policy in the days ahead amid warnings that even members of his own Republican party oppose escalating the unpopular war.

The president has previously said he is considering "all options," including a temporary increase of US troops in Iraq.

Winning the war in Iraq and making tax cuts passed by the Republican-controlled Congress in 2001 permanent—two issues in which the president has butted heads with Democrats—were the top priorities, Bush wrote in a column in Wednesday's Wall Street Journal newspaper.

Bush's Republican Party lost control of Congress on Nov. 7, a defeat attributed to the unpopular war in Iraq war.

Writing on the eve of the Democratic takeover both the Senate and the House of Representatives, Bush warned however of partisanship which he said could lead to a "stalemate." "In the days ahead, I will be addressing our nation about a new strategy to help the Iraqi people gain control of the security situation and hasten the day when the Iraqi government gains full control over its affairs," he wrote.

"Ultimately, Iraqis must resolve the most pressing issues facing them. We can't do it for them. But we can help Iraq defeat the extremists inside and outside of Iraq—and we can help provide the necessary breathing space for this young government to meet its responsibilities." *AFP*

New UN chief keeps distance from death penalty ban

UNITED NATIONS—UN SECRETARY-General Ban Ki-Moon started his first day on the job on Tuesday by departing from the traditional UN opposition to the death penalty, saying nations can make their own decision.

Ban, a former South Korean foreign minister succeeding Kofi Annan of Ghana, was greeted by a UN honor guard, went to a UN meditation chapel to honor fallen peacekeepers, spoke to reporters and held a mass meeting with UN staff.

Asked about the weekend execution of Saddam Hussein, Ban said the former Iraqi leader committed "heinous crimes and unspeakable atrocities against the Iraqi people and we should never forget the victims of these crimes." But he said "the issue of capital punishment is for each and every member state to decide" and in conformity with international law.

South Korea is among 68 nations that retain the death penalty, although Seoul is considering abolishing it.

Groups such as Human Rights Watch have criticized the execution of Saddam, saying it was imposed after a "deeply flawed trial" with political interference. Annan and leading UN rights officials also have opposed capital punishment, as has the European Union.

The UN special representative in Iraq, Ashraf Qazi, released a statement on Sunday saying the world body "remains opposed to capital punishment, even in the case of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide." Ban's new spokesperson, Michele Montas of Haiti, said "the UN policy still remains that the organization is not for capital punishment." She said Ban's comments were nuanced but would not say whether he agreed with Qazi.

While Ban, 62, intends to make a fresh start, he is being pressured by the United States, Britain, France and others for control of key departments—as were his predecessors.

Sir John Holmes, Britain's ambassador to France, is expected to head the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, formerly run by Jan Egeland, who resigned last month and returned to Norway, UN sources said.

The Times of London accused Prime Minister Tony Blair of cronyism for championing a personal friend and said Holmes had little experience, compared with Egeland, in relief work.

It is uncertain what post the United States will get.

Washington had been interested in the peacekeeping department but most envoys believe Jean-Marie Guehenno of France will stay on the job, at least for the time being.

The United States for years held the management and administration department, which is now expected to go to Alicia Barcena, a Mexican biologist and environmentalist who served as Annan's chief of staff. *Reuters*

False report on Indon plane angers kin of passengers

MAKASSAR—INDONESIAN rescuers launched new sea, land and air searches on Wednesday for a missing plane with 102 people aboard as anger grew over false official statements that its wreckage had been found.

Senior government officials apologized late on Tuesday for erroneously saying the 17-year-old Boeing 737-400, operated by budget carrier Adam Air, had been spotted in the mountains of Sulawesi island after disappearing in heavy rain on Monday.

Early reports that 12 people had survived were also officially denied, the general air of confusion prompting reactions of shock, dismay and even scorn from families of the missing passengers and crew.

"I feel fooled. This is what I call playing games with the feelings of the victims' relatives," said Peter Tolitton, whose brother was aboard the ill-fated plane.

"If up to the ministerial level the information is inaccurate, we doubt the credibility of the officials," Tolitton, a Jakarta resident who was flown by Adam Air to Makassar, told Reuters.

The plane was carrying 96 passengers and six crew. A copy of its manifest showed three passengers as non-Indonesians. The US embassy in Jakarta said they were Americans.

After a day crammed with confusing information, rescuers resumed their search at daybreak on Wednesday using military planes in areas around the western coast of rugged Sulawesi island, where the plane emitted distress signals before all communication was lost.

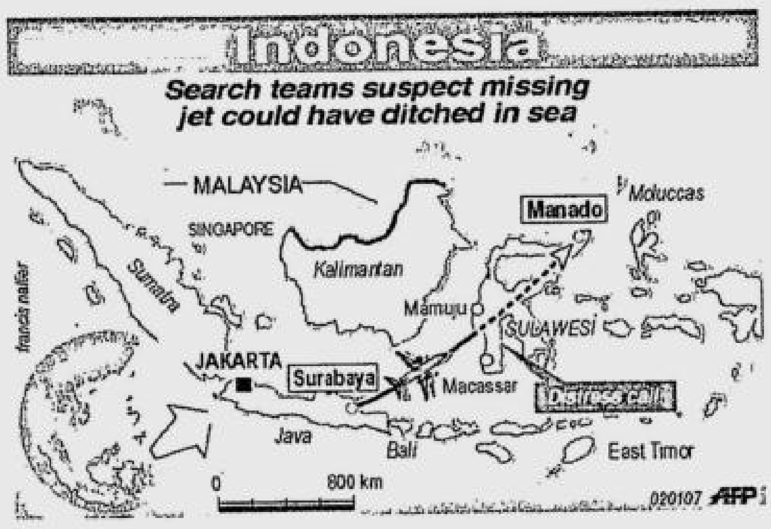
The renewed effort, in the face of heavy rain and strong winds, was being coordinated from Makassar, Sulawesi's largest city, 1,400 km east of Jakarta.

Transport Minister Radjasa told reporters that naval ships had also been sent to the Makassar Strait between Sulawesi and Borneo in case the doomed plane had fallen into the sea.

"Our major obstacle is the weather which is quite a significant problem," he said.

An Indonesian air force official said the aircraft was searching areas between the Sulawesi coastal town of Majene and Toraja, a mountainous region popular with tourists.

However, much of it is covered with jungle and forest, and transportation and communication facilities can be poor at best. *Reuters*



Gerald Ford called 'rock of stability'

WASHINGTON—US PRESIDENT George W. Bush, former presidents and Washington veterans, remembered Gerald Ford on Tuesday as a "rock of stability" whose pardon of scandal-tarred Richard Nixon helped heal a divided country.

Cabinet secretaries, Supreme Court justices and military leaders joined Ford's widow, Betty, 88, inside Washington's cavernous National Cathedral to honor the memory of Ford, the 38th president who died a week ago.

Bush, speaking with Ford's flag-draped casket lying before him, said Ford's decision to pardon Nixon in 1974 after replacing him in the White House probably cost him the presidency.

The pardon is now seen by many historians as essential to having ended America's greatest political crisis that had divided the country. But at the time, Ford was assailed for it and lost the 1976 election to Democrat Jimmy Carter.

Carter, now 82, attended the memorial service along with the remaining former presidents, Bill Clinton, 60, and Bush's father, George H.W. Bush, 82.

"President Ford's time in office was brief, but history will long remember the courage and common sense that helped restore trust in the workings of our democracy," Bush said.

Or as his father put it: "Jerry Ford's decency was the ideal remedy for the deception of Watergate," the scandal that drove Nixon to resign the presidency.

With the Iraq war looming as a source of Washington combat in 2007, a political truce was in effect for a national day of mourning for Ford, whose body later was flown to Grand Rapids, Michigan, for burial.

In the Washington audience were many critics of Bush's Iraq policy. Seated near Bush in the front pew was Carter, a frequent critic. *Reuters*

Thaksin denies any links to blasts

BANGKOK—OUSTED THAI PRIME Minister Thaksin Shinawatra denied suggestions by the military and his Army-appointed successor he was linked to New Year's Eve bombs that killed three people and wounded 38 in Bangkok.

In a letter faxed to media organizations from Beijing, where he is in exile after his removal in a Sept. 19 coup, Thaksin accused the Army-appointed government of jumping to conclusions by blaming "groups that have lost political powers." Many Thais have interpreted that as meaning Thaksin.

"I swear that I have never thought of hurting or destroying the happiness of the Thai people or spoiling the credibility of the country for my political goals," he said in the handwritten three-page letter.

Thaksin, a police lieutenant-colonel before moving into telecoms and then politics, said his contacts within the force suggested the unprecedented blasts were the work of Muslim separatists from the Malay-speaking far south.

"I asked police about the materials and methods used. The bombs were probably the work of militants from the far south," the billionaire said. "I want to condemn the group that was behind the bombs in the strongest terms." More than 1,800 people have died in three years of bombings and shootings in the three southernmost provinces along the Malaysian border.

But the militants, who have not made their aims public and do not issue claims of responsibility, have never taken their campaign beyond the immediate region, a move that would represent a major escalation. *Reuters*

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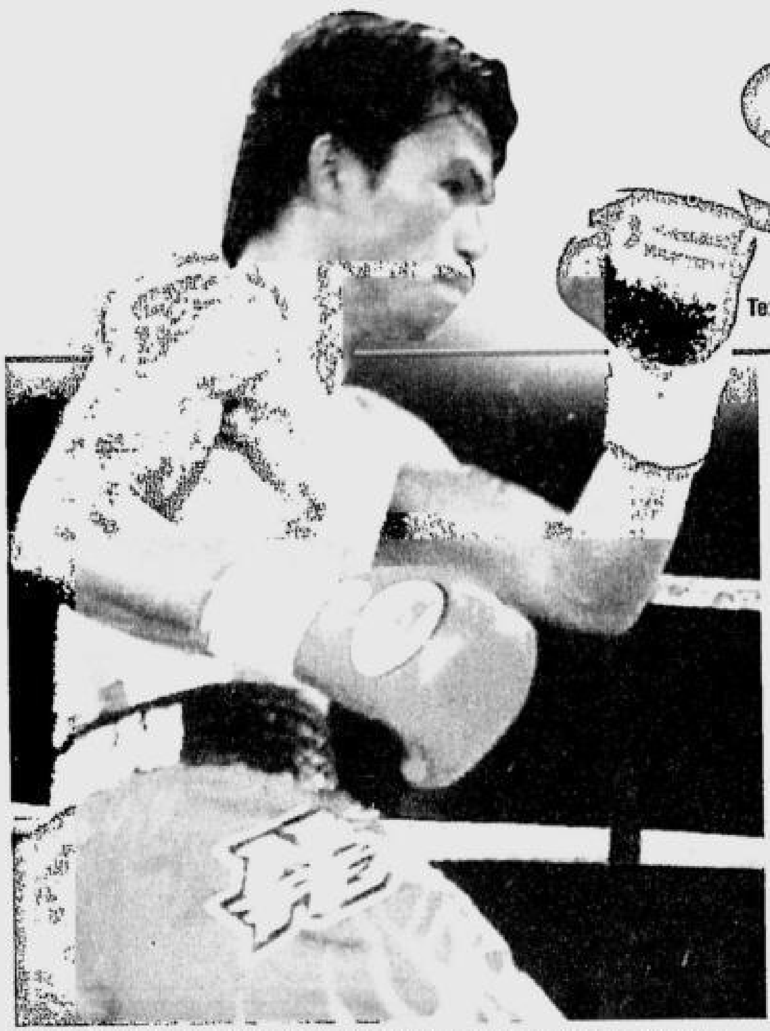


MANNY PACQUIAO: "I'm not chasing (Marco Antonio) Barrera because I've beaten him before." FILE PHOTO

Pacquiao says he's not chasing Barrera

I DON'T NEED HIM. HE NEEDS ME.

This was how Filipino superstar Manny Pacquiao dismissed yesterday the news of his aborted meeting with World Boxing Council super featherweight champion Marco Antonio Barrera, who will be fighting Juan Manuel Marquez instead on March 17.

"*Hindi ako naghahabol kay* Barrera *kasi tinalo ko na siya noon* (I'm not chasing Barrera because I've beaten him before,)" Pacquiao said in an interview with Mindanao scribes from his home in General Santos City.

The eagerly awaited rematch with Barrera, who was stopped by Pacquiao in a non-title clash in 2003 in Texas, was officially put on hold when the deadline set by Golden Boy Promotions chief executive officer Richard Schaefer for Pacquiao to accept its offer lapsed last Tuesday.

A lawyer of Pacquiao, however, said the Filipino fighter did not receive a formal letter of the GBP deadline.

Schaefer said the Barrera-Marquez showdown will take place at the MGM Grand and will be shown on HBO pay-per-view.

Marquez's trainer Ignacio 'Nacho' Beristain confirmed the news, saying: "I am glad to hear that the fight will take place. Now it is time to work. No contracts have been signed or discussed, but I am a man of my word, and I had

PACQUIAO/ A24

WHAT'S INSIDE

▨ **Orcollo,** Valle leave for US /A22

▨ **Sharapova** grosses $30 million yearly /A24

Ring Magazine tags people's champion Fighter of the Year

MANNY PACQUIAO, THE ACKNOWLEDGED People's Champion, was voted yesterday as 2006 Fighter of the Year by Ring Magazine, the acknowledged Bible of boxing.

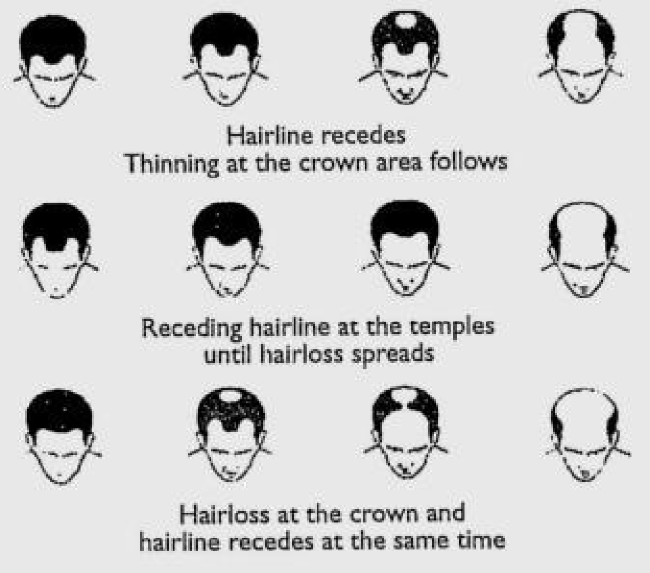
Since the award's inception in 1928, only six fighters below the lightweight (135-lb) division—Henry Armstrong (1937), Willie Pep (1945), Carlos Zarate (1977), Salvador Sanchez (1981), Michael Carbajal (1993), Paulie Ayala (1999)—have been previously selected for the magazine's top honor.

Pacquiao, a two-time world champion, who is the reigning World Boxing Council International super featherweight (130-lb) champion, is No. 7 in the list.

The power-hitting southpaw from Gen. Santos City won his three bouts this year inside the distance, including two knockout wins over Mexican great Erik Morales.

"It's amazing what a little guy with a big smile and an even bigger punch can accomplish," The Ring said in its opening statement. "His modest demeanor and ever-ready smile are the perfect counterbalance to his in-the-ring ferocity. And as if that wasn't enough, his incredible rags-to-riches story is one that resonates with the downtrodden everywhere. Pacquiao carries the hopes and dreams of his fellow Filipinos into the ring with him every time he fights, but has never allowed it to weigh him down once the bell rings," added Ring Magazine in choosing Pacquiao.

"*Masayang-masaya ako sa dahil ako ang pinili nila. Nagpapasalamat ako ng marami sa lahat ng bumoto sa akin* (I'm very happy for this honor. I thank all who voted for me)," added Pacquiao, who will start training in February in his hometown. *Salven L. Lagumbay and Lito De Los Reyes*



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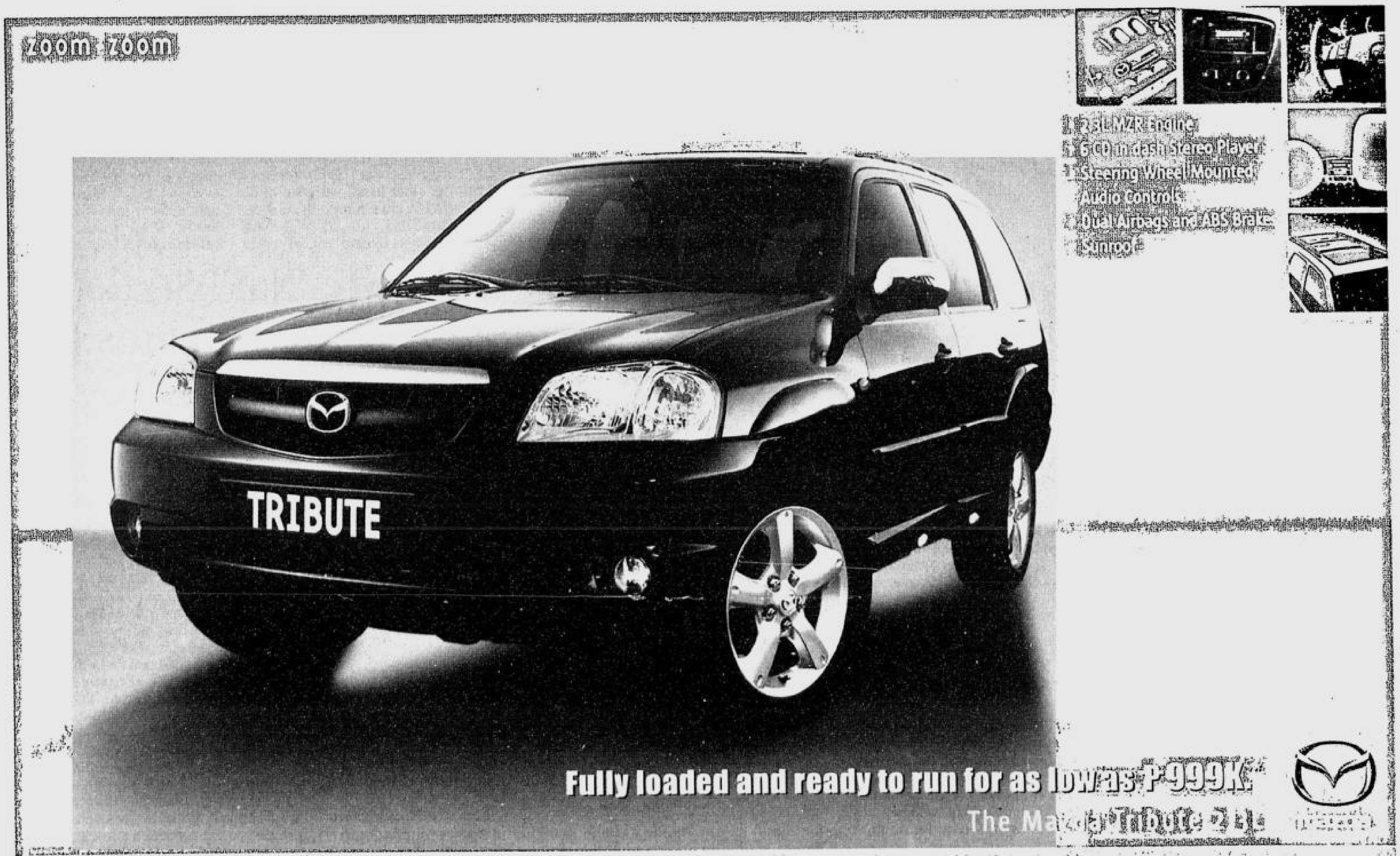

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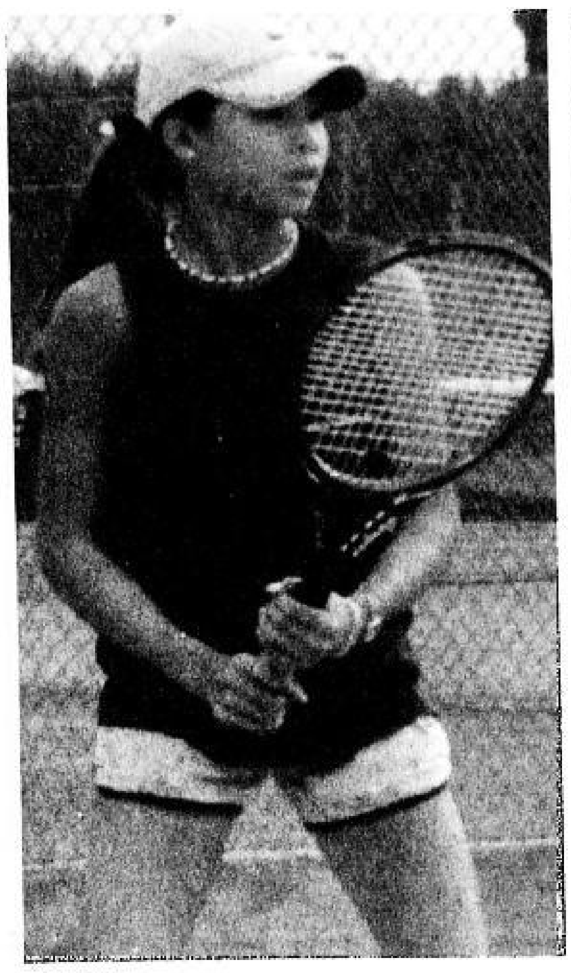
Alvin's daughters budding net stars


CLARICE

CHRISTINE

By Francis Ochoa

ALVIN PATRIMONIO MAY NOT know it, but his distinguished Philippine Basketball Association stint has given his kids not just an inspiration but an insight as to how hard it is to work one's way to the top.

That's why daughters Christine and Clarice are gritting through tough training sessions far from the comforts of home in Spain, hoping to crack into the elite Women's Tennis Association and hopefully represent the country in international meets someday.

"Alvin has been a great inspiration to them," mom Cindy Patrimonio told the INQUIRER through an e-mail. "And it is only now that they know what Alvin had to go through to be a great basketball player and they're really trying to follow in his footsteps so they can be great tennis players as well."

Already, 15-year-old Christine, who celebrated her birthday just last Dec. 29, is showing great promise. She has won five tournaments in Spain, including four in the under-21 class where she is pitted against older, taller and more powerful girls.

Her other victory came in the 18-under class.

Mettle

Clarice, 13, is also proving her mettle, having already won in the 14-under class.

Christine has already started to play in the WTA's lower tier tournaments. In her first event, she lost to 17-year-old Russian Marina Skvortsova, 6-3, 7-6 (3), in a tournament in Benicarlo, Spain, about two and a half hours away from Valencia where the family and the training camp is based.

That tournament was a dry run of sorts for the 5-foot-7 Christine, who will compete in $10,000 tournaments in the WTA next year in Spain and other European countries.

"It's so hard to be away from my papa, brother (Angelo) and friends," said Christine. "But this is what I really want to do and I pray to God that I will be successful someday. I really want to do good no matter what people say."

Patrimonio, winner of four MVPs in the PBA, one of only two players to achieve such a feat, is currently retired but serves as the team manager of the Purefoods Chunkee Giants in the professional league.

"I really love tennis," added Clarice. "There is nothing more I want to do and I pray that I will become the best that I can be someday."

When there are no tournaments, the two girls train religiously from Monday to Friday and only rest during weekends

Being in Spain, where the girls go through home-schooling to keep up with their education, they miss home a lot, but it has its benefits, like meeting famous tennis players such as Danira Safina, Maria Kirilenko, Igor Andreev and David Ferrer.

Marat Safin

One time, Cindy recalled, the girls shared an elevator ride with Russian tennis star Marat Safin.

"The two of them just froze looking up at him," Cindy said. "But I spoke to him and told him that we were from Manila and that he should come visit the Philippines. I told him that they were hoping to be as good as he is."

"Marat looked at them and said you have to become better than me," Cindy recounted.

Spain also provides them with first-class coaches such as former Spain Olympic team head coach Pancho Alvarino, ex-Juan Carlos Ferrero mentor Tomas Mecho and former Safin coach Rafael Mensua.

The girls tried to learn the sport here but got discouraged when they were told "they weren't good enough," Cindy said.

"I just told my kids to take those words as an inspiration to do better and not be discouraged by it," Cindy said.

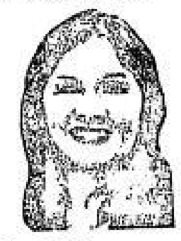
The academy, managed by the Valencia Tennis Federation, maintains a 50-player population, allowing a more personal touch in training.

The coaches are taking the girls development slowly but surely, throwing in a timetable that includes having a good world ranking by the time they reach 18.

"They have improved tremendously but the coaches don't want to rush them," said Cindy. "The coaches believe that if you shoot up rapidly, you go down as fast as well."

SBP update

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

THERE MUST BE A dearth of news in the basketball community following the holiday season.

People have been calling and texting to ask for an update on the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas which suddenly fell quiet following the agreement forged between BAP president Sen. Jinggoy Estrada and SBP head Manny V. Pangilinan.

Indeed, all has been quiet on the SBP front, especially after word got around that a trio of BAP officials had issued a press statement signifying their acceptance of the Jinggoy-MVP accord, but with one condition: that the name Basketball Association of the Philippines be retained and SBP discarded.

The statement was signed by BAP secretary general Graham Lim, legal counsel Boni Alentajan and Lito Puyat whose new designation I can't recall.

***

While there has been absolutely no word from the parties concerned, a source disclosed of an effort to revive the SBP's three-man panel which was dissipated following the resignation of Joey Lina as BAP president and the exit of Bernie Atienza from the College of St. Benilde which made him eligible to represent the NCAA in Pilipinas Basketball.

From what I gathered, Ateneo's Jun Jun Capistrano is being tapped by the Pilipinas Basketball side to replace Atienza.

If this is true, I take it that formal election of SBP officers will follow after the three-man panel has regrouped.

***

Fellow columnist and broadcaster Ronnie Nathanielsz got the surprise of his life when he recently got an e-mail from one of Rudy Distrito's lawyers.

Like Ronnie, Dondon Ampalayo and former commissioner Jun Bernardino must have been just as surprised when they received an identical letter in their e-mail.

The lawyer, whose name Ronnie couldn't recall, was asking for the testimony of each, on behalf of his client who continues to languish in a Las Vegas jail.

According to the lawyer, the prosecutor in Distrito's case had presented to the court proof of the cager's violent temper.

The prosecutor cited the flagrant foul inflicted by Distrito on fellow cager Jeffrey Cariaso during a Ginebra-Alaska game. The prosecutor told the court that as a consequence, Distrito was thrown out of the game and banned from the league.

Distrito's lawyer was now refuting all the prosecutor's claim by asking for a video tape of the game where the flagrant foul was committed and getting testimonies to prove that Rudy is not as violent as pictured.

"Inside the court he might be tough and a little rough, but outside, he's such a sweet guy," said Ronnie. "And you can understand why he played in that style because at that time, the PBA followed the no harm, no foul philosophy."

Bernardino, who was the commissioner at the time of the controversial flagrant foul, has clarified that Distrito was only suspended and not banned from the league.

His license was also temporarily revoked by the Games and Amusements Board, but he could reapply for another license after the suspension has been served.

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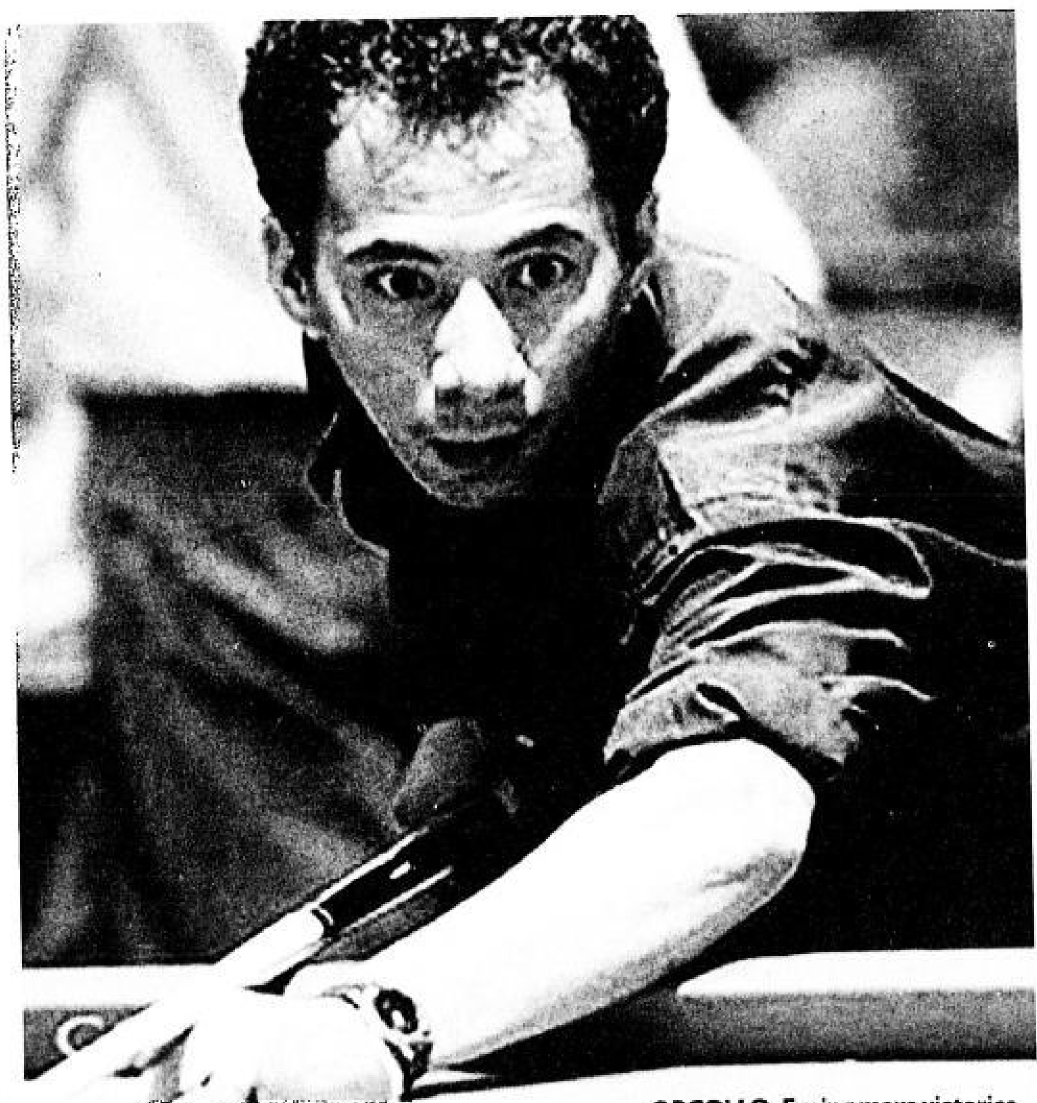
According to PBA Chair Ricky Vargas, the projected deal with Pagcor for the 'ending' bets has been approved by the entire PBA board.

DERBY CITY CLASSIC

Orcollo, Valle leave for US


ORCOLLO: Eyeing more victories.

FILIPINOS DENNIS ORCOLLO AND GANDY VALLE LEFT YESTERDAY to compete in the 2007 Derby City Classic on Jan. 5-17 at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

It will mark the start of the Filipinos' quest for yet another dominating year in the world of pool after an explosive year where they bagged several major tournament titles and pocketed almost $2 million in prizes.

"We're ready," said Orcollo. "We want to start the year with a bang, not only for us but for Philippine billiards as well."

The two players under the Bugsy Promotions outfit will enter all competitions slated in the series—the Derby City One Pocket Division, Derby City Bank Division, Derby City 9-ball Division, Derby City Ring Game and Derby City Master of the Table.

Four other Bugsy stalwarts are also set to compete in money-rich tournaments overseas.

Roberto Gomez, the 2006 World Pool Championship preliminary round topnotcher, and Jharome Pena will fly to Norway on Jan. 17 for the 8-ball Battle of Scandinavian in Oslo which offers 15,000 euros to the champion.

Reigning WPC champion Ronnie Alcano and Carlo Biado, on the other hand, will play in the 17th Annual Kansai 9-ball Open slated Jan 20 to 21 at the Mag Suminoe Billiard hall in Osaka, Japan. At stake is the top prize worth 1 million yen.

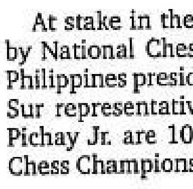
The acknowledged money-game king in the country, the 27-year-old Quezon City based Orcollo had a successful campaign in 2006, winning the six-player invitational World Pool League, the 43rd Annual Reno Open, the World (9-Ball) Championship Bar Table Tournament and the US Bar Table Championship.

Valle, who hails from Davao City, had a relatively quiet 2006, with his runner-up finish to Alex Pagulayan in the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines (BSCP) National Championship as his biggest achievement.

"Last year was really not a good year for me. But I'm determined and confident that I will be able to bounce back this year," said Valle, a former Asian Games gold medalist. "Hopefully this Derby City tournaments will be the start of it."

BSCP president Ernesto "Ernie" Fajardo likewise expressed confidence on the duo's chances in the Derby City event even as he predicts another banner year for Philippine billiards. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

Gonzales doubtful for Zonals


GONZALES

GRANDMASTER-CANDIDATE Jayson Gonzales remains undecided on whether he'll play in the Asian Zonal 3.3 Chess Championship slated Jan. 10 to 19 at the Phu Quoc, Kien Giang, Vietnam.

"I'm tired from playing in so many tournaments last year," said Gonzales, who holds an Elo of 2458 in the RP-Fide rating January list, in Filipino.

According to Gonzales, a Philippine Army sergeant under the HHSQ department, he expects to gain 40 more points after his campaign in Spain and Germany plus the 1st PGMA International Open and 2nd Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. national championships late last year.

Gonzales said if he fails to compete in the Zonals, he will prepare for the Asian Championships set in March at the Subic Freeport in Zambales.

At stake in the event to be hosted by National Chess Federation of the Philippines president and Surigao del Sur representative Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. are 10 slots for the World Chess Championships.

Gonzales needs only one more GM result to become a full-fledged GM.

Gonzales, also the head coach of reigning UAAP chess champion FEU, earned his first GM result in the 2004 Calvia Open in Spain and his second in the 2005 Malaysian Open in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

GMs Joey Antonio and Eugene Torre earlier said they will vie in the Zonals to bolster Team Philippines composed of International Masters Wesley So, Ronald Dableo, Oliver Dimakiling, Darwin Laylo and Paragua. Christy Bernales, WIM Beverly Mendoza and WNM Kimberly Jane Cunanan will play for the women's side. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

La Union Open lures top players

NATIONAL CHESS FEDERATION OF the Philippines Region I chess coordinator engineer Joseph Dumuk yesterday announced the staging of the sixth edition of the La Union Open Chess Championship on March 1 to 7 in the City of San Fernando, La Union.

Co-sponsored by Gov. Victor F. Ortega and City of San Fernando Mayor Mary Jane C. Ortega, the P650,000 event will showcase the country's leading players headed by Grandmasters Mark Paragua, Joey Antonio, Eugene Torre and Nelson Mariano II.

They will be joined by International Masters Wesley So, Jayson Gonzales, Yves Rañola, Barlo Nadera, Chito Garma, Ronald Dableo and Darwin Laylo and Fide Masters Adrian Ros Pacis, John Paul Gomez, Emmanuel Senador, Rolando Nolte, Roderick Nava, Anthony Makinano, Joel Pimentel and Jan Emmanuel Garcia. Also entered is RP six-time executive champion Dr. Jenny Mayor.

Project director of the tournament is NCFP executive director lawyer Sammy Estimo while the arbiter is IA Gene Poliarco. Call (0915) 936-0354 and (0917) 611-6078. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

Nat'l Students cage elims up

THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION ELIMINATION for the 61st National Student Basketball Championship will be held starting Jan. 15.

This was announced by Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP) secretary general Graham Lim after a meeting with representatives of various school leagues recently.

Lim has tapped Prof. Robert Milton Calo of Piscua as acting BAP-NCR director who will supervise the elimination tournament for NCR-based school teams.

The top three teams in both the collegiate and high school qualifying events will earn the right to represent NCR in the national finals scheduled Feb. 27-March 5 at the Lamberto Macias gymnasium in Dumaguete City. The top two women's teams will also earn tickets to the national finals.

The NSBC organizing committee formed by Negros Oriental Gov. George F. Arnaiz has reported that preparations for the annual student competition are right on schedule.

Lim was accompanied during the courtesy call by BAP technical officers George Magsino and Ariel Bermeo.

Defending men's champion West Negros College of Bacolod City and ran by Anthony Agustin is seeded to the national finals with women's champion AMA Computer University handled by its sports director Richard Delos Santos and high school titlist Philippine Christian University handled by its athletic director Fred Olano.

Fearless RP athletes needed, says Ramirez

RAMIREZ

MORE THAN EXPERIENCE AND savvy, there is a strong need to build a strong fearless attitude among national athletes.

In the world stage, Filipino athletes sometimes lack the confidence and air of superiority to intimidate the opponents, observed chair Butch Ramirez of the Philippine Sports Commission.

"Look at the Fil-Ams like the tennis players Cecil (Mamiit) and Eric (Taino). With their presence alone they can intimidate the opponents," said Ramirez. "The opponents can readily sense if you're scared."

That's why the PSC, according to Ramirez, will try to work on extended foreign exposure for the national athletes, especially those tasked with hopefully pulling off the first Olympic gold medal for the country in Beijing next year.

The idea, he said, is to immerse the athletes in world-class conditions all the time until the Olympics. Briefly, they will be allowed to leave foreign training camps to compete in the Thailand Southeast Asian Games in December.

"*Dapat maka*-develop *ng yabang* (they should develop a sense of pride and confidence). That I'm a Filipino and I'm not in any way beneath you," said Ramirez.

"*Hindi pwede yung nahihiya ka* (You cán never be timid in international competitions), especially in combat sports," he added.

He added that more than physical and skills test, the Filipino athlete must also be trained on how to carry themselves among athletes of other nationalities abroad. *Marc Anthony Reyes*

Valero posts 21st straight KO triumph

TOKYO—VENEZUELA'S EDWIN VALERO stretched his world knockout record to 21 by beating Michael Lozada of Mexico to defend the World Boxing Association (WBA) super featherweight title on Wednesday.

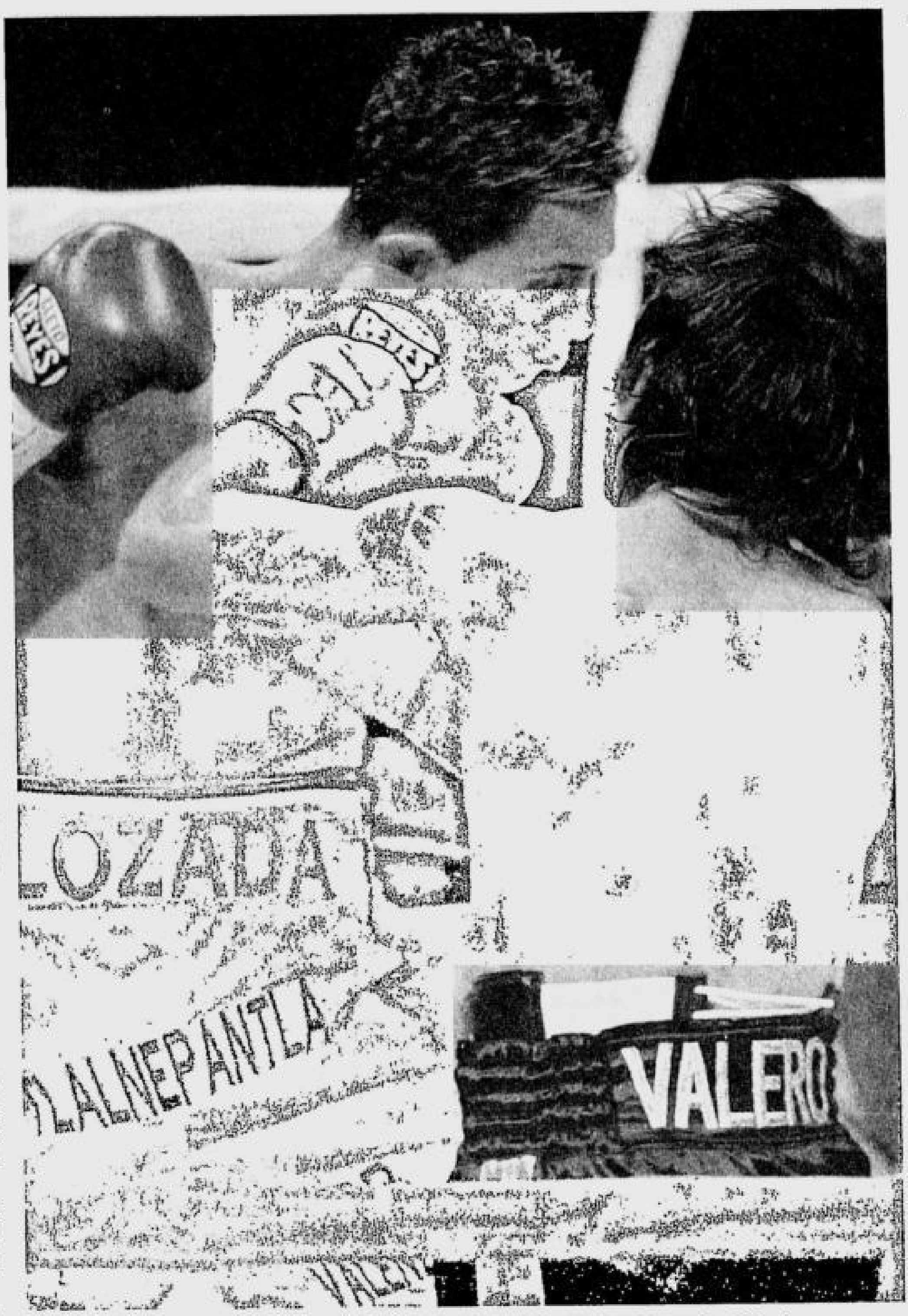
Valero needed only one minute and 12 seconds in the first round to pull off a technical knockout.

"I fired a thundering left straight. But I tell you the truth, I wanted to have more experience by fighting more rounds," said Valero, who belongs to a Japanese gym.

It was his first defense of the title he wrested from Vincente Mosquera, of Panama, with a technical knockout in August last year.

The 25-year-old Valero—who also holds a world consecutive knockout record for first-round KOs—continued his unbeaten professional record since his debut in July 2002 to 21 straight wins, all of them KOs.

Lozada, ranked 12th in the WBA, saw his record reduced to 20 wins, including 13 KOs, against four defeats and a draw. *AFP*



EDWIN Valero of Venezuela (right) lands a left straight to Michael Lozada of Mexico. AFP

Mijares keeps super fly title

TOKYO—CRISTIAN MIJARES OF MEXICO successfully defended his World Boxing Council (WBC) super flyweight title with a technical knockout victory over Japan's Katsushige Kawashima on Wednesday.

The referee stopped the bout one minute five seconds into the 10th round. Mijares, 25, stretched his record to 30 wins, including 11 KOs, against three defeats and two draws.

It was a repeat performance for Mijares, who beat Kawashima by a split decision victory in September last year to become the "interim" champion.

Mijares became the "real" champion when the then title-holder Masamori Tokuyama, a Japanese-based North Korean whose real name is Hong Chang-Soo, gave it up and returned the title to the WBC.

The WBC rules stipulate that champions must defend their titles at least twice a year, but Tokuyama has not fought a bout since February, forcing the WBC to stage the title-match in September for an interim champion.

Former world champion Kawashima has now 30 wins against six defeats. Kawashima took the title in June 2004 and defended it twice before losing to Tokuyama in July 2004. *AFP*

POC sets review of Doha stint

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, WITH THE AID OF A PRIvate consultancy firm, will soon conduct a thorough assessment of the country's recent Asian Games campaign.

Aside from reviewing the plans and programs of each national sports associations, the POC will try to determine whether the country lived up to its Asiad expectations in Doha, Qatar.

Fielding 229 athletes, the Philippines wound up with four gold medals aside from six silvers and nine bronzes. It was the country's strongest showing since the 7-6-24 gold-silver-bronze effort in the Jakarta Asiad in 1962.

POC spokesman Joey Romasanta told the INQUIRER yesterday that all NSAs will be asked to review the plans and programs they set last year.

"The (POC) president (Jose 'Peping' Cojuangco) wanted a thorough review and not just general assessment," said Romasanta.

All athletes fielded in the Doha Games will be measured not just by their finishes but how they fared against their competitors, Romasanta added.

"You can be in the top three but what we want to know is how far were you compared to the gold medalist," explained the former Gintong Alay director.

That way, according to Romasanta, the body can really point out the strength and weakness of each athlete and the findings would reflect on his or her respective NSA plan and action.

The private consultancy firm that will assist the POC is headed by Dr. Benjamin Espiritu.

The POC will also review its policies regarding the fielding of individual or teams in international competitions particularly the one that allows NSAs to field athletes for as long as they are able raise funds to finance the trip.

The lowly rated baseball team was grudgingly reinstated in the RP delegation after raising its own funds then suffered the ignominy of again losing all its games for the second straight Asiad.

The POC also expects to come up with safeguards to preempt leadership disputes in the NSAs.

Gejon gets offer to vie for IBF crown

CEBUANO ERIBERTO "YUKKA" GEJON has been given an offer to challenge International Boxing Federation (IBF) minimumweight champion Muhammad Rachman sometime in the first quarter of this year.

Despite some reservations, Gejon's manager Rex "Wakee" Salud accepted the offer from IBF championship chairman Lindsey Tucker, and in an email, asked for the terms and conditions of the proposed bout.

Salud had earlier balked at the offer, saying that there is not much money in case Gejon wins the IBF title since his boy would most likely defend in the United States.

Should the Gejon-Rachman negotiation fall through, the plan is to offer the chance to the next highest contender to be decided by the IBF based on its latest rankings.

Rachman successfully defended his IBF title with a seventh-round stoppage of Filipino Benjie Sorolla in Jakarta, Indonesia, in a choice title defense promoted by Indonesian multi-millionaire Soeryo Goeritno.

But Martinez Dos Santos, who manages Rachman, said he would ask the IBF to hold an elimination bout between the top challengers to determine Rahman's next opponent, which was the route the Indonesian took on the way to the IBF title.

He added that Rachman is willing to engage World Boxing Organization champion Ivan Calderon in a unification battle even in Puerto Rico "as long as the money is right." *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Pasa to focus on aquatics' other events

TRACE COLLEGE

SHIELA MAE PEREZ

By Marc Anthony Reyes

DIVING, WATER POLO AND SYNCHRONized swimming—the other aquatics' events—will attempt to rise above the surface this year.

Though diving managed to get into the limelight after Shiela Mae Perez won three of the sport's five gold medals during the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, it failed to meet expectations in last year's Doha Asian Games when Filipino divers went home empty-handed.

Just a few days before the Asiad; Perez was found to be suffering from a back injury and that derailed the country's hopes for a medal.

But officials were quick to dismiss the Asiad misadventure as a thing of the past while announcing new plans to hurdle the Olympic qualifying in the 2008 Beijing through international exposure and foreign training camps.

Two new pools

Philippine Amateur Swimming Association, the umbrella organization that runs aquatics, said two new diving pools in Dumaguete and Nueva Ecija, built by the local government units, will be unveiled this year.

The new pools will serve as additional venue for the development of the sport which mainly feeds from young talents in the countryside.

Water polo will again try to wrest the SEA Games crown from Singapore in the coming Thailand SEAG bouyed by its silver-medal performance in 2005.

"We will piggy-back synchro, diving and water polo onto our school and club based talent ID programs. We hope to see new leagues for children divers, synchro swimmers and polo players in late 2007," said Pasa president Mark Joseph.

Synchronized diving

Synchronized diving, now an Olympic sport, suits the Filipinos' innate grace and slim built, according to Joseph.

He added that the world-renowned Swiss Olympic team will come over for a two-week clinic with the national synchronized swimming training team in February.

And since the sport event is slated for inclusion in the Thailand SEAG, Joseph said the country just might have one more golden chance in synchro.

The Philippines, in fact, is lobbying for the permanent status of synchro in the SEAG calendar.

NPC Tri-Media Open badminton slated

THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB WILL hold the NPC Tri-Media Open badminton tournament on Jan. 20-21 and Jan. 27-28 at the Rizal Memorial Badminton Center.

NPC president Roy Mabasa said registration is now in full swing for participants in two levels (Class A and B) men's doubles, ladies doubles and mixed doubles event. Participants can join a team to be composed of six players in each two classes.

Trophies and cash and gift packs await the winners of the tournament aimed to promote goodwill and camaraderie among mediamen and employees from the different publications, radio and television networks duly accredited and affiliated with the NPC.

The NPC sports committee headed by Joey Venancio will bar players with previous experience in collegiate tournaments here and abroad or former members of the national developmental and training pool from the tournament.

For inquiries, contact the NPC Secretariat (Tita Fely): 301-0521 to 22 and telefax 521-9300. Call also tournament coordinator Edwin Rollon at 9006-3707761.

Deadline for submission of entries is on Jan. 15.

SPORTSWATCH

Roligon derby round 2 today4

THE SECOND BATCH OF 75 PARTICIPANTS WILL SEE ACTION TODAY AS THE Noche Buena 5-cock derby resumes at Roligon Mega Cockpit. Twelve cockers posted two wins each from Tuesday's opening round, among them Zaldy Alonsabe (ZA Ken), Col Lorenzo (Renzon Iron Will), Boy Tuazon (Casper), Teng David (RD Three), Leo Magpantay (Cembo), Prime Budanes (PGB), Muling Dorado (UBBA Anniversary), Jerry Ang (TM Warrior) and Ronnie Lacsina (D Boxer). Meanwhile, Roligon's 16th Anniversary 6-cock derby comes next Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 3, 5 and 7, with a guaranteed prize of P4 million at stake. Entry fee is P11,000, according to promoter Rolly Ligon. For reservation of cockhouses, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 852-9812.

Las Piñas 4-cocker slates 70 fights

SEVENTY FIGHTS WILL SPICE UP THE BATTLE OF METRO MANILA'S BIGTIME cockers today at Las Piñas Coliseum as the Concrete Breaker 4-cock derby gets underway at 6 p.m. Participants include Gerry Ramos, Mayor Nene Aguilar, Alex Tobias, Rudy Salud, Lito Orillaza, Butchoy Olano, Eddie Ison, William Co, Sam Mendoza, Renato Shio, R. Pineda, Baldo Perez, RC Sayaman, Bobby Doromal, Jenjen Arayata, Boy Marzo among others. Host Emil Chua has put up a cash prize of P500,000 for an entry fee of P11,000. For details, contact 873-1040 and 874-3910 or 0926-7450375 (Julius). Last Saturday, two cockers ruled the New Year 4-cock derby: Benjie Lim (Papa's Pawnshop) and Jessie Banas (Basta Alive Jan. 27). Meanwhile, the first 20 winners in LPC's regular hackfights from Monday to Sunday will receive a bonus of P1,000 each, said coliseum manager Alex Tobias.

MARIKINA CHESS: Marikina City Mayor Marides Carlos Fernando and GM-candidate Jayson Gonzales grace the start of Christmas edition of the Mayor's Cup Inter Barangay Active Chess Team Championship at the Marikina Sports Center in Marikina City. Barangay Malanday, composed of Danilo Azucena, Ferdinand Paet and Paciano Gulle, emerged team champion in the event organized by Marikina Chess Federation president Johnny Gaudia and National arbiter NM Rudy Ibañez.

Cavaliers rip Spurs; 76ers win

CLEVELAND—LEBRON JAMES scored 19 points, Larry Hughes added 18—13 in the fourth quarter—and the Cleveland Cavaliers' defense smothered and frustrated San Antonio during a rugged 82-78 win over the Spurs on Tuesday.

Damon Jones scored eight points in the final 1:35 as the Cavs, who have struggled on the road, improved to 14-3 at home and beat the Spurs for the second time this season.

They did so by harassing San Antonio all 94 feet, holding the NBA's second-most accurate shooting team to just 38 percent from the field and only 10 points in the third quarter.

Jones scored all 11 of his points in the fourth, and Anderson Varejao added seven rebounds.

Tony Parker led the Spurs with 26 points—14 in the fourth—and Tim Duncan had 18 points and 15 rebounds.

Magic 91, Clippers 86

At Orlando, Florida, Jameer Nelson made four free throws in the final 28 seconds and scored a season-high 29 points in Orlando's victory over Los Angeles.

Dwight Howard had 14 points and 14 rebounds for the Magic, who gave up only two field goals to the Clippers in the last 5 minutes. Trevor Ariza had 14 points and Hedo Turkoglu added 13 for Orlando.

Corey Maggette led Los Angeles with 20 points, but the Clippers struggled to score in the second half. Elton Brand had 15 points and Tim Thomas finished with 13, but each of them scored only two points in the second half.

Warriors 97, Hornets 89

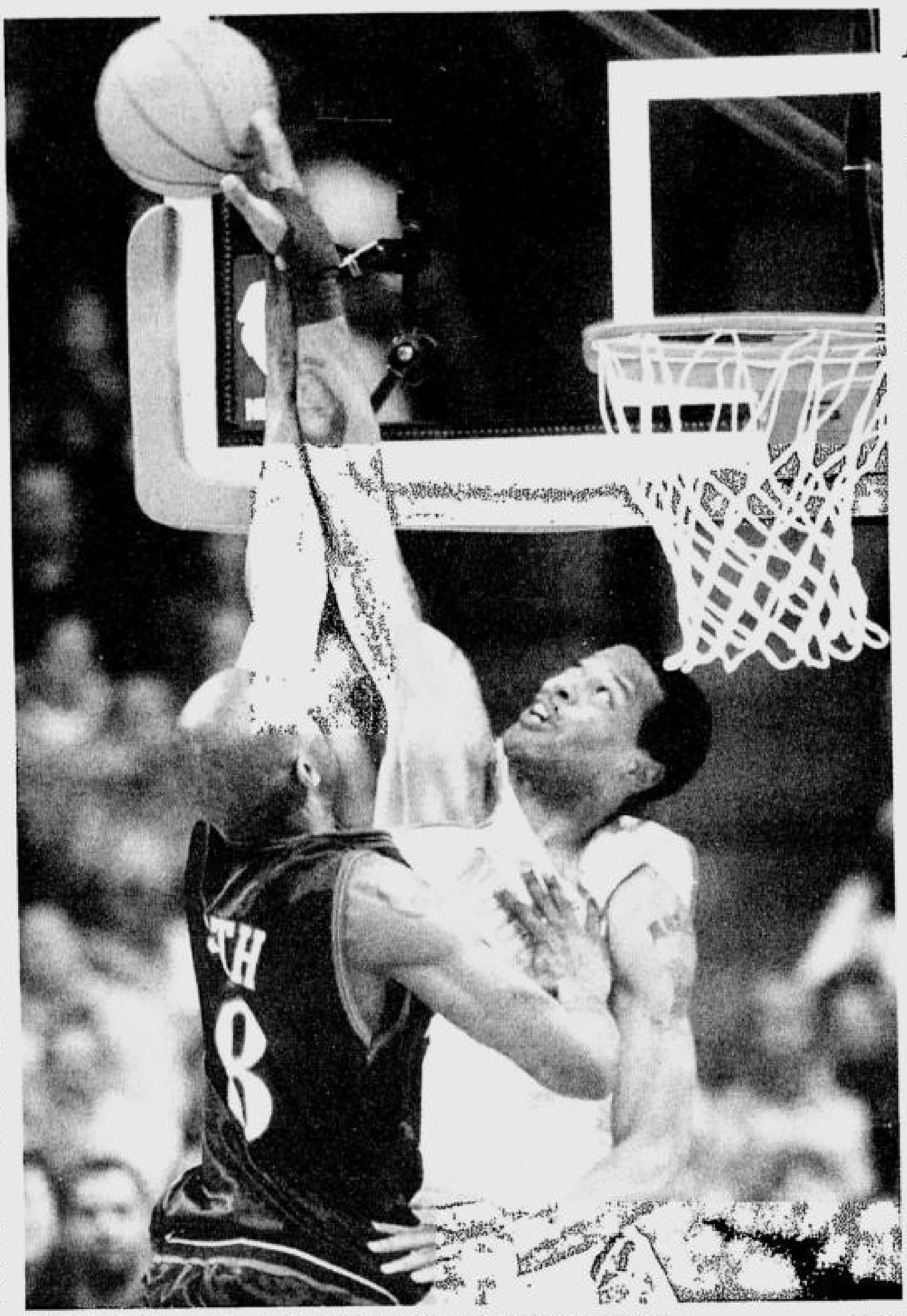
At Oklahoma City, Baron Davis and Matt Barnes scored 29 points apiece to lift Golden State over New Orleans.

Davis and Barnes each had big shots down the stretch for the Warriors, who won despite shooting just 39.5 percent from the field. Barnes added 11 rebounds and five steals.

Rasual Butler scored 30 points for the Hornets. Jannero Pargo had 24 points, and Tyson Chandler grabbed 15 rebounds.

Complete NBA results

Orlando 91, LA Clippers 86; Cleveland 82, San Antonio 78; Golden State 97, N.O./ Oklahoma City 89; Phoenix 97, Chicago 96; Dallas 112, Seattle 88; Philadelphia 108, Denver 97; SacramentO 112, NY Knicks 100



NUGGETS' Marcus Camby (right) blocks the shot of 76ers Joe Smith. REUTERS

Arenas, Bryant named NBA's best of month

NEW YORK—WASHINGTON WIZARDS guard Gilbert Arenas, who posted games of 60 and 54 points in December, was named the National Basketball Association's Eastern Conference player of the month on Tuesday.

Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant earned the Western Conference award.

For Arenas, it was the first player of the month award of his career. He became just the third player in club history to win the award. Juwan Howard won in April 1996 and Jeff Ruland won in March and December 1983.

"I appreciate the honor from the NBA," said Arenas, who won a pair of Player of the Week awards in the month. "December was an outstanding month for our team. We played extremely well and won some big road games. We were able to move into first place and create some excitement and momentum heading into the New Year." Arenas helped the Wizards to a 12-4 mark that erased a six-game deficit and moved them into a tie with Orlando atop the Southeast Division.

In December, Arenas averaged 34.1 points and 6.2 assists while shooting 41 percent from 3-point range. He eclipsed 30 points 11 times and 40 points three times.

On December 17, Arenas scored a league season-high and franchise-record 60 points in a win over the Los Angeles Lakers. He set an NBA record with 16 points in overtime.

Five days later, Arenas scored 54 points in an overtime win at Phoenix, helping end a league season-high 15-game winning streak by the Suns.

Bryant averaged 30.8 points, 5.4 rebounds and 5.4 assists in helping the Lakers to a 10-6 record in December. He also had a pair of huge efforts in overtime games.

On December 15, Bryant had 53 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists in a double-overtime win over Houston.

Two weeks later, he scored 58 points in a triple-overtime loss at Charlotte. *AFP*

Hopman Cup: Czechs subdue Spaniards

LUCIE Safarova: Rising star. AFP

PERTH—TOMAS BERDYCH AND Lucie Safarova threw the Czech Republic a Hopman Cup lifeline on Wednesday after beating Spain, 2-1, in a marathon Group B encounter in Perth.

Safarova claimed a gruelling three-set win over Anabel Medina Garrigues before the 21-year-old Berdych trumped world number seven Tommy Robredo, 7-5, 6-1, to give the Czechs their first win in the mixed team competition.

Spain recovered to win the mixed doubles rubber 7-5 6-2 in 76 minutes to narrow the margin of defeat in a result that could prove crucial when the group is decided on countback with the double header of matches on Thursday evening.

Berdych, world ranked 13, overpowered Robredo from the back of the court, crucially breaking in the 12th game of the opener before racing into a 5-0 lead in the second and then wrapping up victory in an hour and 18 minutes.

It was the second win of the week for Berdych after his singles win over Rohan Bopanna proved the Czechs' only success in their opening 2-1 defeat to India on Sunday.

Earlier, Safarova gave the Czechs the lead after a compelling three-set win over Medina Garrigues. The world number 42 prevailed 6-4 4-6 6-4 in two hours and 21 minutes in the longest match so far at the Burswood Dome.

"I've lost to her three times in the third set and I really wanted revenge and I am happy I did so well," the 19-year-old said in a courtside interview.

Garrigues looked set for her second singles win of the week at 4-2 up in the second but the Czech broke back twice to level the match.

Safarova was also a break down in the third but levelled again before saving two break points on serve at 4-4 and then broke the Spaniard once again to seal the decider.

Spain, who beat Croatia in their first match, must now beat India on Thursday to have a chance of making Friday's final.

Croatia take on India in Wednesday's second Group B encounter, and a win for the Croats would leave all four teams in the group with a single victory. *REUTERS*

Federer ready to defend title

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—ROGER FEDERER isn't messing around as he begins his Australian Open defense, arriving Down Under nearly two weeks before the first tennis Grand Slam of the year.

Top-ranked Federer, who bypassed the Doha, Qatar tournament he won the past two years, flew into Melbourne on Wednesday and headed straight to Rod Laver Arena.

The winner of three Grand Slams last year—he lost to Rafael Nadal in the French Open final—Federer practiced with his girlfriend, former professional Mirka Vavrinec.

The Australian Open begins Jan. 15, although Federer is entered to play in an eight-man exhibition tournament next week at Melbourne's Kooyong, former home of the Open.

OLYMPIC MEDAL PROSPECTS

PSC inviting best foreign coaches

By June Navarro

WHILE OLYMPIC MEDAL PROSPECTS WILL be sent overseas, their coaches will stay home and learn to improve their craft under foreign mentors.

"We'll invite the best foreign coaches here instead of sending the coaches abroad," said Philippine Sports Commission chair William "Butch" Ramirez

The move is not only cheaper but is practical as well, added Ramirez, since many local coaches could avail of new techniques in their respective sports.

Ramirez said he would discuss the issue with the Philippine Olympic Committee before sending the invitations to the foreign coaches.

"What we need is a legitimate coaching education for coaches," said Ramirez. "But we will also sit down (with the POC) and determine the legitimate conference briefings that the NSAs (national sports associations) should support," he added.

Some NSA officials reportedly attended foreign conferences intended for coaches or referees and judges in the past.

"Together with the POC, we will now determine if there is a need for the officials to go (to international conferences) or will it just be the coaches or referees," said Ramirez.

Athletes are the top priorities for foreign trips followed by the coaches, referees and judges with the NSA officials leaving last, Ramirez explained.

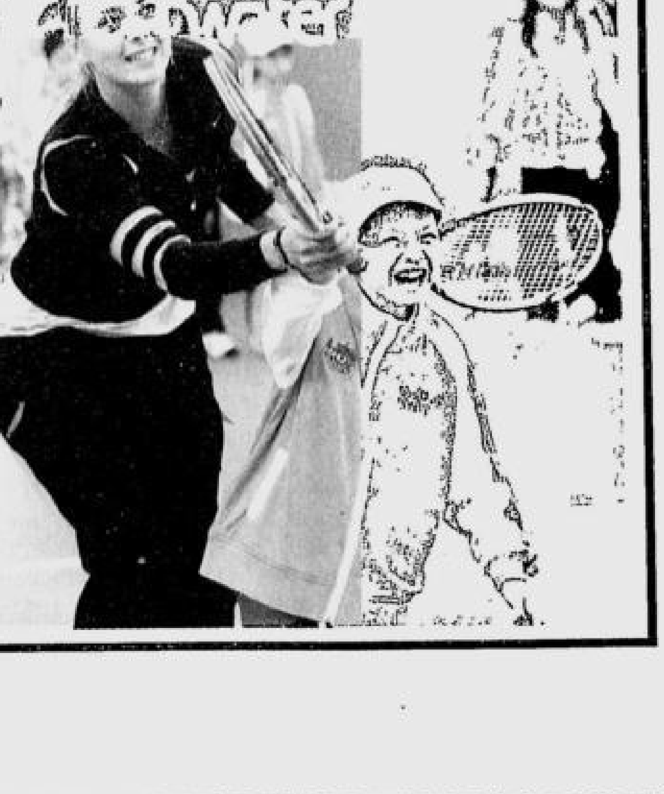
The POC and the PSC are tasked with identifying the athletes who will train overseas beginning in the first quarter of the year until the Olympics.

The only break of the athletes from training will be during the Thailand Southeast Asian Games at the end of the year and a couple of international tournaments in the run-up to the Olympics.

The plan is to send the divers and the fencers to China, the archers and taekwondojins to South Korea, the karatekas to Italy and the gymnasts to Russia.

SPORTS GREATS: Golf great Arnold Palmer (left) shakes hands with boxing legend Muhammad Ali (center) as Miami Heat basketball star Dwyane Wade looks on at the center of the field for the coin toss between Wake Forest University and University of Louisville to begin the Orange Bowl NCAA football game in Miami, Florida. REUTERS

Sharapova grosses $30 million yearly



MIAMI—MARIA SHARAPOVA'S business empire keeps growing.

Sports drink Gatorade and fruit juice maker Tropicana joined the US Open champion's list of endorsements. The deal with PepsiCo Inc., the company that owns both brands, will be announced Wednesday.

The 19-year-old tennis star was second to Justine Henin-Hardenne in the 2006 WTA Tour rankings. She signed a "lifetime" deal with racket and apparel company Prince last year for a reported $25 million (euro18.8 million). She also endorses Canon, Colgate, Nike, Tag Heuer, Land Rover and others.

Her estimated annual income from endorsements, appearance fees, prize money and other sources is believed to be about $30 million (euro22.6 million).

"Not only is Maria Sharapova one of the world's best athletes, but she exemplifies a healthy lifestyle both on and off the court," PepsiCo senior vice president Ron Coughlin said.

Pacquiao says . . .

From page A21

said if the fight was a possibility, I would agree to it happening."

As this developed, WBC president Jose Sulaiman announced that the WBC executive council would decide within the week whether or not to strip Barrera of his title for failing to defend against mandatory challenger Pacquiao.

"That decision has not been made. That will be decided by the executive council and you can expect a decision by the end of this week," said Sulaiman in an interview with leading boxing website Boxingconfidential.com.

He said that GBP has already informed them of the Barrera-Marquez fight, and that Pacquiao's promotional situation will be taken into account when the WBC makes its decision.

The WBC had earlier mandated Barrera to stake his title against Pacquiao following the Filipino's third round knockout of Erik Morales in their rubber match last November in Las Vegas.

"*Walang problema sa akin kung hindi kami maglaban ni* Barrera. *Kung si* Barrera *at* Marquez *ang maglalaban ay wala naman silang malalaking premyo* (There's no problem if I don't fight Barrera. Anyway, Barrera and Marquez will not be fighting for a lot of money)," Pacquiao said.

Pacquiao had been assured of a $5 million purse in his next fight to be promoted by Bob Arum's Top Rank possibly in Macau against an unnamed foe. *Salven L. Lagumbay*

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BUSINESS

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Ecozone investments surged 24.6% in '06

Peza registered 463 projects worth ₱83.7B

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY REPORTed a 24.6-percent increase in the total amount of investments registered with the agency, reaching P83.7 billion last year from P67.2 billion in 2005.

This means the Peza realized its forecast of exceeding its target of posting a 10-percent growth in committed investments.

In terms of the number of projects approved by the Peza, there was an increase of 19 percent to 463 from 389.

Of these projects, 115 ventures—including expansion projects—worth P94 billion were engaged in the information technology sector.

These IT investments are expected to create a total of 37,235 new jobs or 23.9 percent higher than the 2005 figure.

Of the total amount committed in 2006, locator investments accounted for P69.8 billion or 83 percent while ecozone developers represented P13.8 billion.

The locators also accounted for 388 projects while there were 75 developer projects.

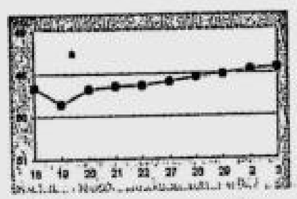
In 2006, the biggest Peza-listed ventures were mostly related to electronics and semiconductors, but there were also Upland Banana Corp.'s P4.6-billion production of cavendish bananas; HSBC's P3-billion business process outsourcing venture; Lepanto Consolidated Mining's P3.27-billion copper project, and San Carlos Bioenergy's P2.25-billion ethanol facility.

Having been listed with Peza, these projects are qualified to avail themselves of incentives such as exemption from corporate income tax for four years, extendable to a maximum of eight years; perks under the Build-Operate-Transfer Law that include government support for accessing Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other sources of financing; access to vital off-site infrastructure facilities, and the option to pay a special 5 percent gross income tax in lieu of all national and local taxes.

Ecozone developers and locators can also avail themselves of exemption from duties and taxes on imported capital equipment, spare parts, supplies and raw materials; exemption from wharfage dues and export taxes, imposts and fees; permanent resident status for foreign investors and immediate family members; employment of foreign nationals, and simplified import and export procedures.

INDICATORS

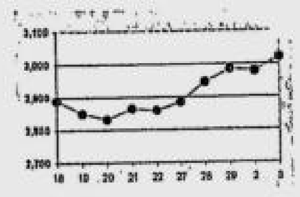
CURRENCIES



₱48.88 = $

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 3, 2007

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks at 10-year high

SHARE PRICES CLOSED HIGHER YESTERDAY, with the benchmark vaulting past the 3,000-point level on upbeat economic prospects, dealers said. They said the prevailing bullish sentiment in the region's emerging markets further added to the positive mood here. The composite index added 43.85 points to 3,020.70, its highest level in nearly 10 years, after moving between 2,976.85 and 3,028.41. It was the index's best finish since April 4, 1997, when it closed at 3,060.59. *(Story on Page A1.)*

Gov't sees ₱4.4-B cut in debt payments

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT EXpects to trim its foreign debt servicing burden by about P4.2 billion this year for every P1 appreciation of the local currency against the dollar, based on latest estimates of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The country's foreign debt stock registered with the BSP inched up to $54.1 billion in end-September from $53.9 billion in end-June on higher offshore borrowings by banks and the sale of foreign bonds issued by Philippine borrowers.

But compared to the same period last year, the external debt eased by 2.6 percent from $55.5 billion mainly due to net loan repayments, including prepayment of debts ahead of maturity, as public and private sector borrowers took advantage of the strong peso to trim their foreign debt exposure.

In 2006, the peso gained by 7.6 percent to close at 49.03 to the dollar. This year, the peso has risen past the 48:$1 level and is expected to further rally to the 46-47 levels later this year.

The public sector, particularly the national government, accounts for 69.6 percent of the country's total foreign debt burden while the private

GOV'T/B2

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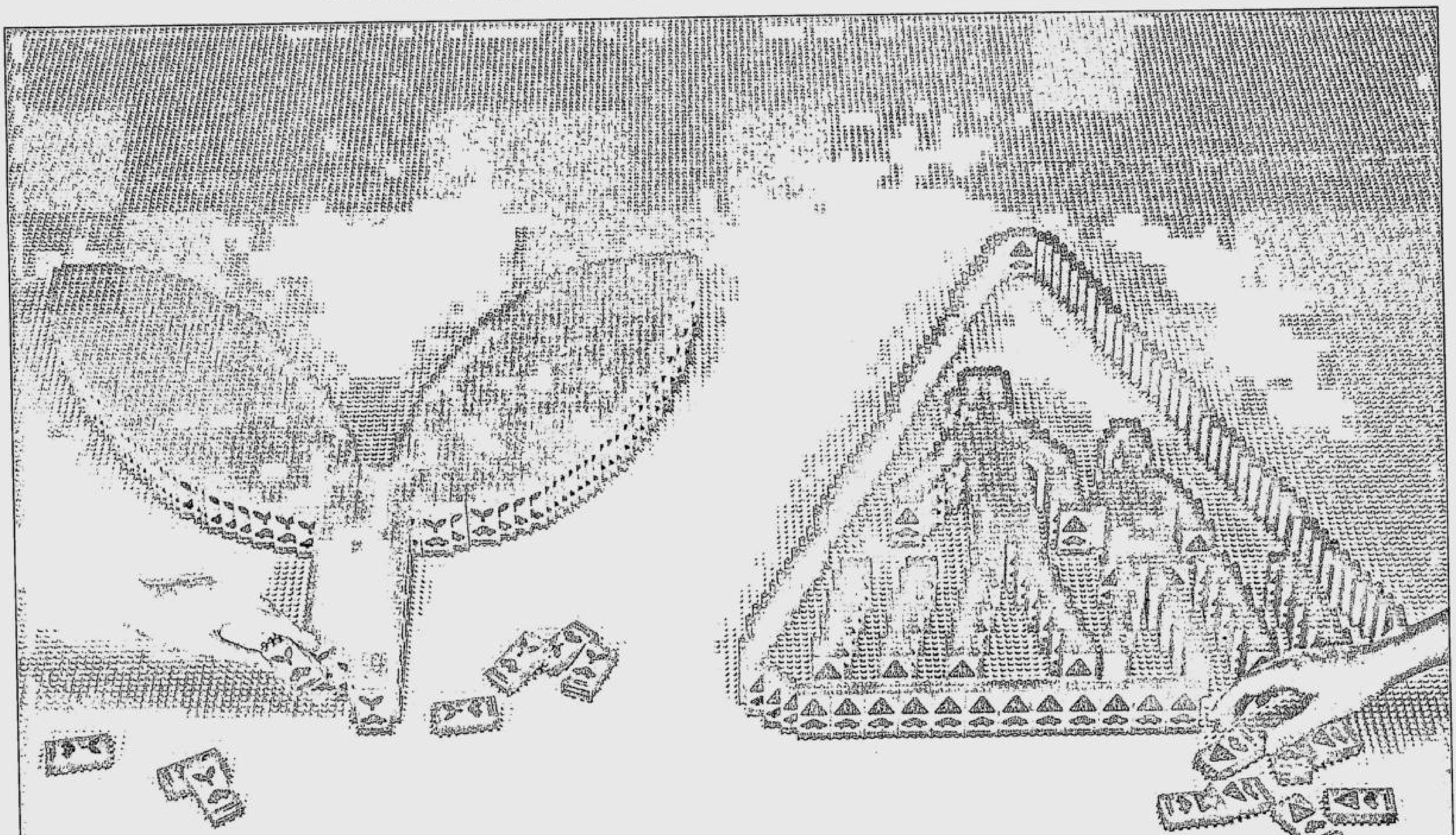
▨ **Gov't seeks $300M in grants from US** /B6



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New clear power plant

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

HOW TRUE IS THE TALK IN THE POWER INdustry that the Japanese conglomerate Toshiba is courting earnestly this cute administration of Gloriaetta?

Toshiba, from what I hear, wants to operate (as in "activate") the controversial nuclear power plant in Morong, Bataan.

The plant is still a virgin. I mean, it has never been used. Sure, let's do it tomorrow!

While we are at it, we can also probably try to use—for the very first time—the brand new but still idle airport terminal called Naia 3.

If it's not too much to ask, maybe we should also do something about that rotting, never-been-used structure at the Manila Bay reclaimed area called the "Film Palace."

The last time I checked, the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant was costing this country only somewhere between $160,000 and $170,000 a day in interest payments alone.

Actually, the Marcos dictatorship started its construction at the height of the oil crisis in 1976 at an amazing cost of more than $2 billion.

That was only about three times the normal cost of similar power plants elsewhere in the world such as the ones in South Korea and Taiwan.

But the wonder of it all is that the plant never even produced a single watt of electricity in this country that has the second highest electricity rates in the whole of Asia.

Since the plant was a Marcos legacy, the administration of former President Corazon "Tita Cory" Aquino decided to mothball it in 1986.

The Tita Cory administration even secured a lasting nuclear ban by putting it in the 1987 Constitution.

And so today Toshiba is taking keen interest in the Bataan nuclear plant only 20 years after it was mothballed.

The reason for that is simple: Toshiba has bought the outfit of the US firm Westinghouse that had built the nuclear plant.

For its plan, nevertheless, Toshiba will have to wait for the Cha-cha, assuming of course that the constitutional amendments will remove the nuclear ban.

That's one tough hurdle for Toshiba, since the Cha-cha train of Gloriaetta and Speaker Jose "Yoda" de Venecia seems to have been derailed.

Thus, at this point, the activation of the Bataan nuclear plant remains a long shot.

Still, some groups in the power sector are convinced that this country must keep an open mind on the use of nuclear power.

Of course, they would rather die first than go public with their sentiments, apparently for fear of attacks from anti-nuclear activists.

The fact remains that the rest of the world is paying attention—AGAIN—to the potential of nuclear power.

For instance, the avowed nuclear-free Australia, according to news reports, is studying the use of nuclear power.

Even our oil-rich neighbors Malaysia and Indonesia are doing the same thing, and they are already self-sufficient in energy.

Taiwan and South Korea are said to be building new nuclear plants, despite the Chernobyl meltdown in 1986. (Whadayano—that was the same year that the Bataan nuclear plant was mothballed!)

Anyway, the Bataan nuclear plant already cost this country a lot of pain—and it's not only the debt burden.

After the Tita Cory administration shelved the plant, her people forgot to cover for its lost capacity with other power plants.

Result: severe power shortage. This subsequently only forced us to put up expensive plants in the early 1990s.

And so until today we continue to enjoy the second highest electricity rates in the whole of Asia.

Really, we endure untold sufferings from our power sector, primarily because it was and still is in a mess. Take a bow, Napocor!

So there, the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant already cost us a great deal of money with $160,000 a day in interest alone.

Then it helped in derailing our economic development with the power crisis it directly caused in the early 1990s.

And now it seems the plant is brewing into a brand new threat in politics, as Toshiba is said to be looking at activating it.

Sure, we really need more generating power, and the Bataan power plant may offer part of the answer.

For one, this cute administration is still in denial of the "power crisis" that is sure to come in a couple of years.

A power plant project takes about five years—from initial planning to actual operation. This cute administration has not done any of those stages.

We are already suffering from power failures in many parts of the Visayas.

But the problem of this cute administration, should it entertain the advances of Toshiba regarding the Bataan nuclear plant, will still be … well, public opinion.

Alright, I know that this cute but still-politically struggling administration has a record of NOT caring about public sentiment at all.

Well, just take a look at what Gloriaetta did recently, using her vast power over everybody else in this country to turn over to US custody the US Marine corporal convicted of raping a Filipino woman.

Just how insensitive is that to public sentiment, anyway?

Gov't to complete sale of stake in PTIC within the first quarter

Teves says ownership issue not a problem

By Michelle V. Remo

TEVES

FINANCE SECRETARY MARGARito Teves said questions about the identity of the owner of Parallax Capital Management, the highest bidder for the government's stake in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp., should not hinder the sale of the state-owned asset.

Teves said there were no legal impediments to the government's plan to sell its shares either to Parallax or to First Pacific Co. Inc. despite ownership issues.

The government is selling its 46-percent stake in PTIC, which holds 13.8 percent of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT). PLDT, in turn, is controlled by First Pacific Co. Inc. of the Salim family of Indonesia.

Doubts have been cast on the integrity of the bidding for the government's PTIC shares following unconfirmed reports that Parallax, which is based in Singapore, is also owned by the Salim family.

"There is no evidence yet indicating that the Salim family owns Parallax," Teves said in a briefing yesterday. While saying that, Teves stressed that should it be proven that the Salims own Parallax, the government would not be held legally liable to sell its shares to either First Pacific or Parallax.

Although Parallax submitted the highest bid of P25.2 billion for the PTIC shares, the transfer of the asset is not automatic since First Pacific, being a stockholder of PLDT, had the right to match the highest bid.

First Pacific is given 30 days, starting Dec. 20, to match the bid submitted by Parallax.

As of yesterday, Teves said, First Pacific has not yet exercised its right to match the highest bid. But Teves said that it was his understanding that First Pacific was committed to exercise its right and get the controlling stake of PTIC to boost its stake in PLDT.

Teves said he expected First Pacific to match the highest bid before the 30-day period ends. The country's finance chief added that the government expects to complete the sale of its shares in PTIC within the first quarter.

On criticisms that the government set a floor price for its PTIC shares that was below its potential market value, Teves said in a statement that the setting of the floor price was based on careful study. The government set a floor price of P24.99 billion.

The setting of the floor price was based on the weighted average price of PLDT shares during their 10 heaviest trading days between Nov. 13 and Dec. 4, the DOF said. PLDT has more than 12 million shares with an average value of P2,448.45 a share, it added.

The government then applied the 15-percent discount on the computed value of the shares to arrive at the floor price. Teves said the government could grant a 15-percent discount in setting a floor price.

"A discount was applied to the underlying value to make it more attractive to prospective bidders," another DOF official said.

The DOF expects the sale of the government's PTIC shares to be the first big-ticket item to be privatized this year.

Under the government's fiscal program for 2007, the government wants to generate P500 million from privatization. But Teves has called for the increase in the revenue target from privatization given the major government assets that are in the privatization lineup for this year.

Other state-owned assets that are targeted to be privatized include television firms RPN-9 and IBC-13, Philippine Postal Corp., shares in San Miguel Corp. and Manila Electric Co., and Al Amanah Islamic Bank.

Atlas Mining unit taps Deutsche Bank for $100-M loan

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CARMEN COPPER CORP., A WHOLly owned unit of Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp., said it was borrowing $100 million to help fund the rehabilitation of Atlas' copper mine in Toledo City, Cebu.

In a disclosure, Atlas said Carmen Copper has tapped Deutsche Bank AG as arranger of the loan facility. The $100-million loan will be guaranteed by the Philippine Export-Import Credit Agency.

Atlas and Deutsche Bank hope to complete due-diligence review and documentation relating to the loan by February.

Atlas' board also announced that an operating agreement between itself and Carmen Copper has been approved by the Mining and Geosciences Bureau. No details were disclosed.

Carmen Copper is studying a possible public listing this year on either the Toronto Stock Exchange in Canada or the London Stock Exchange, Atlas chair Alfredo Ramos said earlier.

Carmen Copper carries Atlas' copper mining-related assets mainly in Toledo, Cebu.

Proceeds of a proposed initial public offering will partly finance the reopening of the Toledo mines in Cebu that Atlas Mining closed in 1994 after it was beset by a mudslide, low world copper prices and huge debts.

Atlas Mining is bent on reopening its copper mines in Toledo City and in developing its other copper assets through its newly formed unit, Carmen Copper.

Formerly controlled by the Soriano family, which used to run blue-chip firms San Miguel Corp. and integrated paper manufacturer Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines, Atlas Mining fell under the control of creditors in 1994.

Alakor Corp., headed by businessman Alfredo Ramos, acquired majority control of the Toledo mines, with Atlas Mining unloading a big chunk of its obligations in a debt-for-equity swap with Alakor and Minoro Mining and Exploration Corp.

Philippine mining has been gaining foreign investor interest after the Supreme Court upheld a law that allows foreign ownership of mining projects.

Gov't sees ₱4.4-B cut in debt payments

From page B1

sector has a 30.5-percent share.

The P4.4 billion in estimated debt repayment savings refer only to the external borrowings of the national government, BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said.

The Department of Finance, for its part, has assumed P4 billion in interest and principal savings for each peso of appreciation for 2007, Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said.

Despite the slight increase in external debt in the third quarter, the country's major external debt indicators continue to improve.

Based on the latest BSP report, the external debt service ratio or the percentage of the country's principal and interest payments to total exports of goods and receipts from services and income, eased to 11.4 percent in September from 11.6 percent in June and 14.1 percent a year ago.

"The ratio, which has remained well below the 20-percent international benchmark, indicates that the country has sufficient foreign exchange earnings to service current maturities of its foreign obligations," the BSP reported.

As a share of gross domestic product, or the total amount of goods and services produced by the economy in a given period, the external debt ratio was estimated by the BSP at 48.6 percent, down by 2.1 and 10 percentage points from June and year-ago levels, respectively.

Based on the BSP report, the maturity profile of the country's external debt also remained favorable with medium- to long-term loans accounting for 89.5 percent. These loans, with original terms of more than a year, have a weighted average maturity of 17.9 years.

Public sector borrowings have a longer average term of 20.4 years compared to 9.4 years for the private sector.

Official creditors—consisting of multilateral institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank and bilateral creditors such as the Japan Bank for International Cooperation—account for 37.9 percent of the country's total debt, followed by foreign holders of bonds and notes at 35.6 percent and foreign banks and other financial institutions at 19.9 percent. The rest of the creditors (6.6 percent) are mostly foreign suppliers.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 3, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.3	12,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	45.5	45.5	44.5	45	2,452,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	64	65.5	64	65.5	1,840,200
China Banking Corp.	680	700	680	700	1,760
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	400
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.46	0.47	0.46	0.47	2,330,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	82	82.5	81	82.5	133,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51.5	51.5	51	51.5	4,060,100
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	55	55	55	55	1,200
Philippine National Bank	44	45	43.5	45	92,700
Phil. Savings Bank	48	48	48	48	2,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	25	25	24.5	24.5	40,000
Security Bank Corp.	65	66.5	65	66.5	28,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	49	49	49	49	800
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.81	0.81	2,290,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.2	5.2	237,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	4.7	4.9	4.7	4.9	70,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	10,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1625	1625	1625	1625	80
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.36	1.4	1.36	1.4	52,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	285	287.5	285	287.5	600
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2010	2030	2010	2030	1,200
Ivantage Corp.	1.62	1.64	1.62	1.64	1,466,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.8	4.9	4.75	4.75	46,581,000
First Gen Corp.	56	56.5	56	56.5	976,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	64.5	67.5	64.5	67.5	1,171,400
Manila Electric Co. A	54.5	57	54.5	56.5	414,900
Manila Electric Co. B	55	58	55	57.5	1,682,100
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.4	9.5	9.3	9.3	4,533,000
Petron Corp.	4.15	4.15	4.1	4.1	1,568,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.18	1.22	1.18	1.2	2,678,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	517,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20.75	20.75	20.75	20.75	13,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	43.5	43.5	43	43.5	303,400
RFM Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	151,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	90,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.33	0.35	0.33	0.34	80,000
San Miguel Corp. A	66	66.5	65.5	66	53,100
San Miguel Corp. B	76.5	77	76.5	76.5	273,900
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.14	2.18	2.12	2.16	2,955,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19.25	19.5	19	19.5	245,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.12	1.2	1.12	1.2	69,037,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.15	3.25	3.15	3.25	581,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	5,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.8	8	7.7	7.7	7,725,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6.1	6.3	5.6	6.1	57,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4.1	4.1	4.05	4.1	578,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.4	5.7	5.4	5.7	11,316,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.7	0.71	0.68	0.69	8,080,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.2	0.21	0.2	0.21	15,420,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	100,000
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	3,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	20,000,000
Ayala Corp.	575	580	570	580	59,080
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.65	0.66	0.65	0.66	250,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	7.2	7.4	7.2	7.4	5,015,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	7,900,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.85	3	2.85	3	2,121,000
APC Group Inc.	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.38	10,340,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	13,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.16	1.18	1.14	1.14	4,470,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.64	1.64	10,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.1	3.15	130,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	9,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.22	2.36	2.22	2.34	16,101,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6	6.1	6	6.1	2,008,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.8	4	3.8	3.9	2,858,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.32	0.42	0.32	0.33	9,010,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.9	1.92	1.9	1.92	549,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	551,400
Medco Holdings	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	400,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	3.95	4	3.95	4	8,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.52	1.54	718,000
Pacifica	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	2,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	110,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.42	1.68	1.4	1.68	101,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	390,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.165	0.17	0.165	0.17	20,800,000
SM Investments Corp.	327.5	327.5	325	325	215,570
South China Resources Inc.	1.08	1.1	1.08	1.1	740,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.6	1.66	1.6	1.64	442,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.3	7,510,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.125	0.13	1,500,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.25	15.75	15.25	15.75	5,359,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.48	0.48	40,000
Belle Corp.	1.14	1.16	1.14	1.16	2,639,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	1.62	1.64	1.56	1.6	441,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.42	0.43	0.42	0.43	8,330,000
Cebu Holdings Inc	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	105,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.48	1.48	1.46	1.46	60,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	20,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	1,500,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	540,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.53	0.56	0.53	0.56	57,010,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.54	109,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	1,500,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.64	1.66	38,089,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.5	2.75	2.5	2.7	59,000
Interport Res.	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	10,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	5,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.47	0.49	0.47	0.48	4,210,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.67	0.72	0.67	0.68	1,820,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.8	5.1	4.8	5.1	183,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.37	150,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15.75	15.75	15.5	15.75	4,263,500
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.65	0.66	0.64	0.64	4,070,000
SM Development Corp.	2.6	2.75	2.6	2.75	1,836,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11	11.25	11	11	674,700
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.6	0.62	0.6	0.61	160,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.1	0.105	5,980,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	20	20	20	20	12,500
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.92	1.94	1.9	1.9	3,943,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1255	1285	1255	1280	23,910
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.8	1,325,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2550	2610	2550	2580	66,740
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.215	0.245	0.215	0.23	100,630,000
Imperial Res.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	100,000
Ionics Inc.	2.18	2.24	2.18	2.2	696,000
IPVG Corp.	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.8	217,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	5,100,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	521,000
Transpacific Broadband	1.92	2	1.86	1.92	708,000
Philweb Corp.	0.032	0.032	0.03	0.032	442,100,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	102,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.3	1.34	1.3	1.34	300,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	20.25	22.5	20.25	22.25	620,600
Keppel Phils. Marine, Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	100,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	35,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.98	2.02	1.96	2	2,637,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	43,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	1,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.6	0.61	0.6	0.6	16,230,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9	3,000
Ipeople Inc.	3.05	3.2	3.05	3.15	88,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.14	2.14	2.06	2.06	1,035,000
Paxys Inc.	19.5	19.5	19.25	19.25	271,000
Philippine Seven Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	11,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	6	6	5.7	5.8	639,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	32,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	60,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	10	10	9.7	9.8	1,699,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.4	9.4	9.3	9.3	49,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.1	3.1	2.85	3	184,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	13,110,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	8,820,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	130,400,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	20,300,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.012	0.013	3,058,800,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.1	4.1	3.8	3.85	18,686,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.5	18.75	18.5	18.5	40,300
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.77	0.78	0.76	0.78	2,770,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.6	1.6	1.52	1.54	11,014,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	4,930,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	117,400,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	71,800,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.14	1.2	1.14	1.16	11,229,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.14	1.24	1.14	1.2	3,054,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10	10	10	10	224,000

CURRENCIES

January 3, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.753069	1.000000	48.9260
Japan	Yen	0.006339	0.008418	0.4119
United Kingdom	Pound	1.486633	1.974100	96.5848
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096796	0.128535	6.2887
Switzerland	Franc	0.620831	0.824402	40.3347
Canada	Dollar	0.647022	0.859180	42.0362
Singapore	Dollar	0.492073	0.653424	31.9694
Australia	Dollar	0.599577	0.796178	38.9538
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.997689	2.652731	129.7875
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.200813	0.266660	13.0466
Brunei	Dollar	0.490471	0.651296	31.8653
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000111	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.021213	0.028169	1.3782
UAE	Dirham	0.205045	0.272279	13.3215
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.327900	64.9688
Korea	Won	0.000814	0.001081	0.0529
China	Yuan**	0.096484	0.128121	6.2684
Argentina	Peso	0.246302	0.327065	16.0020
Brazil	Real	0.352891	0.468604	22.9269
Denmark	Kroner	0.134115	0.178091	8.7133
India	Rupee	0.017065	0.022660	1.1087
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.213515	0.283527	13.8718
Mexico	New Peso	0.069946	0.092881	4.5443
New Zealand	Dollar	0.533335	0.708215	34.6501
South Africa	Rand	0.109617	0.145560	7.1217
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023265	0.030893	1.5115

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Jan. 2, 2007

* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters Screen.

** Asian Time Closing Rate as of Dec. 29, 2006 (Bloomberg)

RP can't afford cost of planned legislated wage hike, says Ecop

With 12.26M workers, move seen to cost ₱1.2T

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE EMPLOYERS CONFEDERATION of the Philippines yesterday said it would not accept any compromise on the proposed law granting a P125 across-the-board wage hike which, at a total cost of P1.2 trillion, would negate efforts to keep the economy afloat.

Ecop also urged the Senate to junk the House-approved bill and to adopt a hands-off policy on wage matters.

Ecop president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. said the country could not afford the wage hike especially at a time when the economy was "reeling from fierce global competition and harsh domestic challenges."

Ortiz-Luis said the legislated wage hike would hasten the demise of hundreds of thousands of micro establishments and the small- and medium-scale enterprises in the formal sector. This, he added, would run counter to government efforts to promote and strengthen these sectors.

"Moves to legislate pay adjustments reflect the prevailing highly-populist orientation to continue increasing the benefits of the employed wage and salary workers in the formal sector in complete disregard of the stark realities in the labor market," Ortiz-Luis said.

He said such a law would worsen the trend of increasing unemployment and underemployment, shrinking formal sector and an expanding informal sector.

Ecop data showed that from 1999 to 2003, employment in the formal sector dropped by 307,228 while employment in the informal sector expanded by nearly 2 million.

Ortiz-Luis warned that should lawmakers insist on a legislated wage increase, "more and more businesses would have no choice but to go underground."

The informal sector includes salary workers in family-based or unregistered economic units, industrial home workers, the self-employed, and the unpaid family workers.

Ecop chair Miguel B. Varela said efforts of the business community to keep the economy afloat would be put to naught due to the adverse implications of the wage hike bill.

Varela added that increased wages would be an added burden due to the cost of its full implementation, estimated at P1.2 trillion based on 12,262,000 workers in private establishments as of 2005.

In a statement, the Federation of Philippine Industries said wage hikes would drive up inflation and undermine the country's competitiveness as an investment site.

It said the proposal did not consider the differences in living standards in different regions and the profitability levels of industries.

DR. JAMES G. DY (center), owner of the Chinese General Hospital and Medical Center and president emeritus of the Filipino-Chinese General Chamber of Commerce Inc, was conferred by the Central Luzon State University an honorary doctorate in Humanities during the school's 16th mid-year commencement exercise. Dy, who is also chair and president of the Philippine Chinese-Charitable Association Inc., was honored for his exemplary performance and exceptional achievements as a businessman and civic leader.

HGC to pay ₱9B worth of debts to GFIs this year

By Michelle V. Remo

STATE-OWNED HOME GUARANTEE CORP. (HGC) said it was planning to settle this year nearly P9 billion worth of its long-overdue liabilities with various government financial institutions, some of which fell due way back in the 1990s.

HGC said the plan was in line with efforts to clean its books and roll off its financial reform program.

Of the amount, P4 billion is owed to the Social Security System (SSS), P3 billion to Land Bank of the Philippines, P1 billion to the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), P400 million to the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), and another P400 million to Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC).

Gonzalo B.A. Bongolan, HGC president, said in a press briefing that the liabilities would be settled either in the form of cash or *dacion en pago* (in kind). The agency intends to use its internally generated cash and proceeds from bond sale in paying off portion of its obligations, he said.

HGC hopes to raise funds through the sale this year of P4 billion worth of assets and P6 billion worth of bonds. The agency, as stated under Republic Act No. 8763, is tasked to operate a credit guaranty program in support of the government's efforts to promote home ownership. It provides guarantee to housing loans extended by financial institutions to borrowers.

Bongolan said the agency's huge liabilities were partly attributed to poorly planned housing programs in the past. As a result of weak project planning, he said, many of the housing loans suffered defaults, thereby bloating HGC's debts.

The HGC chief said that learning from experience, HGC had become stricter in approving guarantee applications since 2001. He said HGC had not been providing credit guarantee to mass-housing projects that were deemed risky, and had been focusing more on individual housing loans.

Bongolan noted that HGC's default rate, which reached 11 percent on its outstanding guarantees from 1996 to 2001, had improved to an average of only 0.06 percent from 2002 to 2006.

He said HGC had an estimated networth of P6 billion.

Late last year, HGC raised some P12 billion from the sale of bonds. The amount will be used to meet its financing requirements, including debt servicing.

PAL sees third year of profit

AFTER A BRUISING BOUT WITH external challenges, especially volatile jet-fuel prices, last year, Philippine Airlines heads into the new year with fresh hope that recently launched aircraft and product enhancements will strengthen its competitive position in 2007.

"It was a challenging year," PAL president Jaime J. Bautista described 2006.

Oil price spikes continued to be the flag carrier's biggest challenge in 2006. The benchmark Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) price opened the year at $70 per barrel, shooting up to $80-to-$90 per barrel range in July and August, before dropping back to the $70 per barrel level by the end of 2006.

To cope with the situation, PAL implemented a fuel-conservation program that resulted in at least $2 million in savings last year. It also embarked on a major cost-reduction and efficiency program.

Despite the challenges, Bautista said PAL was seen to end its current fiscal year ending in March 2007 with a respectable net income.

PAL posted profits of $17.6 million in fiscal 2004-2005 and $28.7 million in 2005-2006.

PAL started an ambitious fleet modernization program in late 2006. On Oct. 20, it unveiled the first of the 20 brand-new Airbus A320 aircraft it was planning to acquire. Two more aircraft were later added with eight more scheduled for delivery this year.

By the time the major part of the refleeting is completed in December 2008, PAL will be operating one of the youngest narrow-bodied fleets in the world.

For its wide-bodied fleet, PAL announced last month the acquisition of up to six brand-new Boeing 777-300 Extended Range aircraft over the next six years. The first deliveries will be made in 2009.

Napocor, PNOC-EDC in talks over unused steam settlement

By Abigail L. Ho

NATIONAL POWER CORP. AND PNOC Energy Development Corp. are in talks to settle some P243 million worth of steam earmarked for the Bacon-Manito Geothermal plant but was not used because of the facility's closure.

Two units of the Napocor-owned plant were shut down due to damages inflicted by the typhoons that hit Bicol.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, PNOC-EDC company information officer Erudito Recio said the amount represented billings for steam that was supposed to be used by two units of the Bacon-Manito facility during the Sept. 25-Oct. 25 and Oct. 25-Nov. 25 billing cycles.

For the Sept. 25-Oct. 25 billing cycle, Napocor was supposed to remit to PNOC-EDC P104.3 million for the 110-megawatt (MW) Bacman 1 unit and P15.2 million for the 20-MW Bacman 2 Botong unit, he said.

Napocor was supposed to pay another P107.9 million for Bacman 1 and P15.6 million for Bacman 2 Botong during the Oct. 25-Nov. 25 billing period, he added.

PNOC-EDC supplies the steam used by the two Napocor plants in generating power.

"Billings for the Sept. 25-Oct. 25 and Oct. 25-Nov. 25 cycles for both Bacman 1 and Bacman 2 Botong module are subject to ongoing negotiations between PNOC-EDC and Napocor. The (Bacon-Manito geothermal plant) contributes 6.7 percent of PNOC-EDC's total monthly revenue," Recio said.

Typhoon Milenyo, which hit the country on Sept. 28, severely damaged the Bacman plant, particularly its cooling tower equipment. PNOC-EDC's steamlines to the Botong module of Bacman 2 were likewise damaged, causing both Napocor and PNOC-EDC to declare a force majeure situation.

Recio said that while PNOC-EDC had completed repairs on its steamlines as early as Oct. 19, another typhoon, Reming, hit the plant on Nov. 30, inflicting damages on the plant again.

"This has moved back Napocor's restoration schedule, which was originally targeted for completion by December 2006. Discussions with Napocor are ongoing regarding the final date of the plant restoration. The costs of the damages will be fully covered by the insurance of both Napocor and PNOC-EDC," he said.

Recall of 3G licenses illegal, says Smart

By Riza T. Olchondra

ANY MOVE TO RECALL AND AUCTION off 3G licenses awarded in 2005 would be illegal and a violation of the awardees' rights, Smart Communications Inc. said in reaction to House Resolution No. 190.

The House resolution seeks the recall and bidding of 3G licenses previously awarded by the National Telecommunications Commission to various companies.

"House Resolution No 190 is not a statute and does not have the compulsion of law. Worse, it is legally infirm as it seeks to nullify valid acts of this honorable commission and prejudices rights already vested," Smart said in a statement sent to the NTC.

Smart said the NTC exercised its quasi-judicial functions and only after strict evaluation did it award 3G licenses and frequencies on Dec. 28, 2005.

"Under the principle of checks and balance, only the courts can rule on the validity or invalidity of memorandum circular 07-08-2005 (which allocates the 3G radio frequency bands)," Smart said.

Smart said nullifying its 3G license, which is a form of property right, by mere legislative action, "would constitute legislative interference impairing the obligations of contracts and a deprivation of property without due process of law."

The result would be impaired services and stunted growth for the industry as a whole, the telco said.

Smart also said recalling the 3G frequencies would result in massive losses. Smart said it had invested about P3 billion within the first year of implementation of the 3G technology.

The country's largest mobile phone company has recorded 250,000 3G users since it launched the technology on a trial basis in February last year. Smart commercially launched its 3G services three months later.

St. Peter Life Plan Certificate as Dealer of Pre-Need Life Plans renewed for 2007

The Securities and Exchange Commission, after considering the completion of all prescribed requirements, has renewed on December 8, 2006, the registration of ST. PETER LIFE PLAN, INC. as a Dealer of Pre-Need Life Plans in the Philippines valid from January 1, 2007 until December 31, 2007 per SEC Pre-Need Order No. 372 Series of 2006.

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For further details please contact our customer service representatives at 371-7757.

ADVT

ATI secures ₱500-M loan

PORT DEVELOPER AND OPERATOR ASIAN Terminals Inc. (ATI) has signed up for a P500-million revolving credit facility with Security Bank Corp., the company said in a disclosure to the stock exchange.

ATI said the credit facility had a three-year term.

"The proceeds of the loan will form part of the general fund of the company," ATI said.

The company has a contract with the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) to render cargo handling services at the Port of Manila's South Harbor. The original contract was only up to 2007 but it was extended by six years or up to 2013.

It was tasked to integrate arrastre, storage and stevedoring services at the South Harbor.

With the extension, ATI committed to accelerate the development and modernization of South Harbor through the upgrading of port facilities, deployment of new equipment and streamlining of port procedures.

The company has reported posting a 19.2-percent increase in net income as of September last year.

It said that revenue growth, combined with cost-saving measures, resulted in an increase in the company's net income in the first nine months to P535.3 million from P449.2 million in the same period in 2005.

ATI's consolidated revenue in the first nine months of the year grew to P3.1 trillion from year ago's P3.02 billion. This was driven by a 9.1-percent rise in its port business.

"ATI's commitment to operational and service excellence was key to attaining a solid performance in the first nine months of 2006," said Jeremy J.L. Rickcord, ATI president and chief executive officer, in an earlier statement.

Riza T. Olchondra

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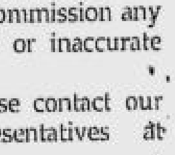
Ms. Joanne Bernardo, our Filipino representative in Canada, is in Manila to answer your questions personally about available opportunities when you land.

Informal briefings will be held at Suite 1206, 12/F MCS Tower, Makati Cinema Square, Don Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City on Saturday, January 6, at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Dale Thompson, our president and senior consultant, will conduct the briefing. Mr. Thompson is a member of the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants (CSIC).



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SECRETARY'S CERTIFICATE

I, **LEONIDES F. CRUZ**, Corporate Secretary of the Manila International Airport Authority, do hereby certify that, at its 265th Regular Board Meeting held on 29 May 2006, the MIAA Board passed the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION NO. 2006-032

"**WHEREAS**, the MIAA Board of Directors, in its Resolution No. 2005-058, has authorized the conduct by MIAA Management of public hearings on the planned imposition of Security and Development Charge on departing international passengers;

"**WHEREAS**, in the public hearings attended by airline representatives and other stakeholders, including the media, the need to enhance the security systems and programs at the NAIA to address the over-growing security threat to civil aviation was recognized;

"**WHEREAS**, consistent with internationally-accepted practice, the Security and Development Charge is sought to the imposed to augment the funding requirements to help finance the high costs of such security enhancements;

"**WHEREAS**, after considering the issues, concerns and the inputs from the public hearings, particularly on the spread of such financial burden not only to affect departing international passengers but other airport users as well, including the Authority itself, the amount of US DOLLAR 3.50 as Security and Development Charge was determined as the appropriate amount;

"**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of Management, that the request of MIAA for authority to impose Security and Development Charge of US DOLLAR 3.50 on all international departing passengers not exempted by law or any government rules and regulations, and to denominate the same in Philippine Peso at the rate of PESOS: TWO HUNDRED (Php200.00) be, as it is hereby **approved**, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations;

"**RESOLVED, FURTHER**, that the imposition of the Security and Development Charge be effective fifteen (15) days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation or whenever the MIAA General Manager deems appropriate under the circumstances, whichever is later;

"**RESOLVED, FINALLY**, that as regards departing domestic passengers, the authority of Management to conduct public hearings on the imposition of a Security and Development Charge in the amount of PESOS: SEVENTY FIVE (Php75.00) per passenger, be, as it is hereby, **approved**."

That, the foregoing Resolution is still in full force and effect, and has not been repealed, amended, or modified as of this date.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have signed and affixed the seal of the MIAA to this Secretary's Certificate this 6th day of July 2006 in Pasay, Metro Manila.

(Sgd.) **LEONIDES F. CRUZ**
Corporate Secretary

(PDI - Jan. 4 & 11, 2007)

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- Must be a graduate of any 4 year course, preferably Mass Communication or Business Management
- Must have at least 6 months work experience in the same field
- Must possess excellent communications and interpersonal skills
- Should have pleasing personality
- Must be between 21-25 years old
- Proficient in MS Office applications
- Can relate well w/ all levels of the organizations and clients

Please submit your resumé with 2x2 picture @ 11/F BDO Plaza, #8737 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City and look for Ms. Vangie Ramos. You may also email your resumé at **ehramos@lashaciendas.com.ph / vangieramOs@yahoo.com**. For other details contact 8128490, or 8125059.

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid
Republic of the Philippines

7CW-GSC-010

PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF ELECTRICAL SYSTEM AT PHASE A/B, PUBLIC MARKET, DADIANGAS SOUTH, GENERAL SANTOS CITY

(Name of Project)

Proposed Installation of Electrical System at Phase A/B, Public Market; work activites includes general electrical, switchboard, ducting, steel support (Switchboard/ducting) and other miscellaneous item affected by the project.

The Local Government Unit of General Santos City (LGU-GSC), through 2004 Annual Budget intends to apply the sum of P5,721,577.41 being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the **PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF ELECTRICAL SYSTEM AT PHASE A/B, PUBLIC MARKET, DADIANGAS SOUTH, GENERAL SANTOS CITY**. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The LGU-GSC now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for the **PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF ELECTRICAL SYSTEM AT PHASE A/B, PUBLIC MARKET, DADIANGAS SOUTH, GENERAL SANTOS CITY**. Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type and cost of the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs on or before **January 11, 2007, 2:00 PM** at **Bids and Awards Committee Office, 2nd Floor, Right Wing, City Hall Building, General Santos City**. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on **January 11, 2007, 2:00 PM** at **Bids and Awards Committee Office, 2nd Floor, Right Wing, City Hall Building, General Snatos City**. Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entiled to purchase the Bidding Documents.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only Bids from eligible Bidders will be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

Interested Bidders shall submit their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the BAC Secretariat at **Bids and Awards Committee Office, 2nd Floor, Right Wing, City Hall Building, General Santos City** on or before **January 11, 2007, 2:00 PM**.

Interestd eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the LGU-GSC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from **8:00 AM** to **5:00 PM** on **January 15 to January 18, 2007**.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon the presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **P5,000.00** for **PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF ELECTRICAL SYSTEM AT PHASE A/B, PUBLIC MARKET, DADIANGAS SOUTH, GENERAL SANTOS CITY**. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative on or before **January 18, 2007, 5:00 PM**.

The **LGU-GSC** will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on **January 19, 2007, 10:00 AM** at the following address **City Mayor's Conference Room, 2nd Floor, Right Wing, City Hall Building, General Santos City.**

Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before **February 01, 2007, 2:00 PM**. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of Cash, Certified Check, Cashier's Check, Manager's Check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit equivalent to One Percent (1%) of ABC or Bank Guarantee equivalent to One and Half Percent (1½%) of ABC or Surety Bond equivalent to Two and a half percent (2½%) of ABC or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on **February 01, 2007, 2:00 PM** at the **Bids and Awards Committee Office, 2nd Floor, Right Wing, City Hall Building, General Santos City**. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at **2:00 PM, February 01, 2007**.

Completion of the Works is required by **Eighty Six (86) Calendar days.**

The **LGU-GSC** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Bids and Awards Committee
2nd Floor, Right Wing, City Hall, Building, General Santos City
Tel. Nos. (083) 301-0553, (083) 301-3834
Fax: (083) 301-0553
Website address: www. gensantos.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **NAEL JOSEPH D. CRUSPERO**
BAC Chairman

(PDI--Jan. 4, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
HARTE-HANKS PHILIPPINES, INC. 4th Level Market Market Mall, Fort Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City	Ryan Karl Edward Dittes	Centre Manager
OHSUNG TRAVEL & TOURS AGENCY, INC. Unit 13-8137 Plaza J. Escriva Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Tae Joo Lee	Marketing Manager
MEEJOO LATEX CORPORATION U-4-G & 2/F-5 Salem International Comm Domestic Road, Brgy. 192, Pasay City	Seong Min Hwang	Marketing Consultant
MEEJOO LATEX CORPORATION U-4-G & 2/F-5 Salem International Comm Domestic Road, Brgy. 192, Pasay City	Kyungsoo Kim	Finance Manager

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

for LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI - Jan. 4, 2007)

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TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVE

- Architecture or Civil Engineering Graduate
- Male/Female, 23 years old and above
- With Driving Skills

For interested applicants, please come for an interview on January 5-8, 2007 anytime between 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at:

CVG Centre, #36 1st Avenue,
Cubao, Quezon City.
Look for Russel Magdugo or
call 723-4922

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Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

In Compliance with RA 7041

CENTRAL RECORDS DIVISION

RECORDS OFFICER V – Item No. OMBA-OMBA-RO5-1998; SG 24

Education: Masteral Degree; **Experience:** 4 years in position/s involving management and supervision; **Training:** 24 hours of training in management and supervision; **Eligibility:** Career Service Professional / Second Level Eligibility.

Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for;
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1" x 1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar/Board Rating for CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
5) * Transcript of Records;
6) * Certificates of Seminars/Training Attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable)
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

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0922.918-0830

DAVAO: DCLA PLAZA, GRD FLR. # 10 & 17
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Tel. No. 0927 970-3351 Mr. Fan
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People, Events & Products

Top business ethicist speaks Jan. 5 at AGSB

THE ATENEO GRADUATE SCHOOL of Business and the Governor Jose B. Fernandez Jr Ethics Center will conduct a forum on corporate governance and business ethics on Jan. 5 as part of AGSB's 40th anniversary celebration with the theme "Our Country is Our Business."

The speaker is Dr. Patricia H. Werhane, Ruffin professor of Business Ethics and senior fellow of the Olsson Center for Applied Ethics, Darden Graduate School of Business Ethics, University of Virginia. She holds a joint appointment at DePaul University, where she is Wicklander chair in Business Ethics and director of the Institute for Business and Professional Ethics. She currently teaches ethics courses in the Darden MBA program and heads the school's Doctoral Program Operating Committee.

WERHANE

Werhane is a prolific author, an acclaimed authority on employee rights in the workplace, one of the leading scholars on Adam Smith, and founder and former editor in chief of Business Ethics Quarterly, the leading journal of business ethics. She was founding member and past president of the Society for Business Ethics and, in 2001, was elected to the executive committee of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics. Professor Werhane received her BA Philosophy from Wellesley College and her master's and doctoral degrees in philosophy from Northwestern University. Before joining the Darden faculty in 1993, Werhane served on the faculties of Loyola University in Chicago and Dartmouth College. She was a visiting scholar at Cambridge University and the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The forum will be open to the public and will start at 6 p.m. at the Auditorium, basement 1 of the Ateneo Professional Schools campus in Rockwell Center, Makati City. Call Jingle P. Noynay at 899-7691 to 96 local 2228 or 898-5007 12 noon to 6 p.m.

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A dream team-up by the pacesetters of lifestyle has been fulfilled by AIG Credit Cards and Rustan's to elevate your shopping experience to the crest of prestige and finery. Through this partnership, AIG Credit Cardholders will get VIP treatment at Rustan's. This includes a dedicated express payment counter and exclusive gift wrapping station for all purchases. To top it all off, purchases charged to the AIG Credit Card will qualify for the 'One Million Peso Shopping Spree' at Rustan's. Grand draw is on Jan. 31. Shown during the contract signing are (tanding from left) Maurice V. Hilario, VP for card acquisitions and sales, AIG Philam Savings Bank Inc; Milen G. Treichler, consultant, marketing communications, Rustan Commercial Corp; Sandro L. Villaraza, VP for card product management, AIG Philam Savings Bank Inc; (seated from left): Myla C. Gonzalez, VP for card marketing and sales, AIG Philam Savings Bank Inc; Joven D. Reyes, country manager-Philippines, AIG consumer finance group; Marina V. Tantoco, special assistant to the president, Rustan Commercial Corp, and Annie O. Umali, SVP-country operations head, AIG Philam Savings Bank Inc.

'Sacred Space, A Gift of Grace'

THE REGINA ROSARII CONTEMPLATtive Association Inc and the Dominican Sisters of the Regina Rosarii will sponsor a concert titled "Sacred Space, A Gift of Grace" featuring Jose Mari Chan, Lakambini Grace Zaguirre Ramos and Maria Teresa Roldan Vizconde. It will be held Jan. 5 at the Meralco Theater, Ortigas Avenue, Pasig at 7:30 p.m. The concert will raise funds for the maintenance of the Regina Rosarii Peace Park in Quezon City and for ministry work such as providing food for street families living in karitons (pushcarts). Tickets are available at D' Regina, 70 Scout Fernandez Street, Quezon City or call 372-5327 or 0919-2694286.

St. Bridget's College Class '67 reunion

St. Bridget's College Elementary 1963 and High School 1967 graduates will turn 40 come 2007 and will have a reunion on Jan. 6 and 7. To facilitate communication, alumni are encouraged to call/text Cresencia Gutierrez at 0921-3835904/043-722-0311; Fe Macalintal at 0917-8303307/807-0150/850-9504.

"GOD HAS YOU IN HIS KEEPING, WE HAVE YOU IN OUR HEARTS"

In Loving Memory

on the First Death Anniversary of

LUIS P. LOGARTA II

Born December 3, 1966 – Died January 04, 2006

Holy Masses will be offered on his First Death Anniversary on January 04, 2007.

At the following churches:

1.	Mother of Perpetual Help Parish (Mission Church)	-	Boston, Mass. USA
2.	San Sebastian Church	-	Woodside, New York USA
3.	St. Robert Belarmine Parish	-	Burbank, CA, USA
4.	St. Genevive Church	-	Roscoe, Panorama City, CA USA
5.	St. John de La Salle Parish	-	Granada Hills, CA USA
6.	Our Lady of Lourdes Parish	-	Northridge, CA USA
7.	St. Joachim Catholic Church	-	Hayward, CA USA
8.	St. Mel Church	-	Woodland Hills, CA USA
9.	Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish	-	Rosario Complex, San Pedro, Laguna
10.	St. Polycarp Parish	-	Poblacion, Cabuyao, Laguna
11.	Holy Trinity Parish	-	Pansol, Calamba City
12.	St. Bartolomew Parish	-	Nagcarlan, Laguna
13.	Cathedral of St. Paul the First Hermit	-	San Pablo City
14.	St. Joseph The Worker	-	Calendola Village, San Pedro, Laguna
15.	San Vicente Ferrer Parish	-	Mamatid, Cabuyao, Laguna
16.	Espiritu Santo Parish	-	Tayuman, Sta. Cruz, Manila
17.	Our Lady of Loreto Parish	-	Bustillos, Sampaloc, Manila
18.	San Fernando de Dilao Parish	-	Paco, Manila
19.	The Way The Truth and The Life	-	Parañaque City
20.	Basilica de Santo Niño	-	Cebu City

His beloved mother **ALICE LOGARTA**; wife **MELANIE**; brothers **ERNESTO JR.**, **ANTONIO**, **ALLEN**; children **LOUIELANE**, **LUIS III**, **GABRIEL** & **PAOLO**, relatives and friends would like to request readers to remember him in their prayers and wish to convey their sincere appreciation to all those who have in one way or the other kept him alive in their hearts and memories in the years to come.

CLASSIFIEDS

Sacred space a gift of grace

THE REGINA ROSARII CONTEMPLATIVE Association Inc. and the Dominican Sisters of the Regina Rosarii are sponsoring a concert titled "Sacred Space, A Gift of Grace," featuring Jose Marie Chan, Lakambini Grace Zaguirre Ramos and Maria Teresa Roldan Vizconde. The concert will be held on January 5, 2007 at the Meralco Theater, Ortigas Avenue, Pasig at 7:30 p.m.

The concert is being organized to raise funds for the maintenance of the Regina Rosarii Peace Park, to give Our Lady, Regina Rosarii a permanent home in Quezon City, and to build up funds for the Ministry of the ROCA, Regina Rosarii Contemplative Association and the Dominican Sisters of Regina Rosarii particularly our ministry in providing food for the association's "K friends" – the street families living in *karitons*, or push-carts.

The concert repertoire featured, both well-loved romantic compositions by Chopin, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Liszt and Strauss, and Filipino music compositions by Francisco Santiago, Avelina Manalo, Evelyn Belgica-Ribaya, Antonio Buenaventura, Lucresia R. Kasilag, Felipe Padilla De Leon, and Francisco Buencamino Sr.

Tickets are available at D' Regina, 70 Scout Fernandez St., Quezon City. For inquiries, call tel.: 372-53-27 or 0919-269-42-86. Free delivery of tickets after Christmas Day.

Investors in People (IIP) Certification conferred to 13 Philippine companies

TEN PHILIPPINE COMPANIES HAVE SUCCESSfully achieved the Investors in People (IIP) Certification this year, to complete the 13 pioneering IIP in the country, namely: Asian Eye Institute, Figaro Coffee Systems Inc, First Electro Dynamics Corp, First Philippine Industrial Corp, Guaranfood Manufacturing, HBC Inc, MMLDC Foundation Inc, Pestcon Management and General Services Corp, Philippine Electric Corp, Q2 HR Solution.

The first set of certified Investors in People in the Philippines includes Lafarge Cement Services (Philippines) Inc, TNT Worldwide Express Inc, and British Council (Philippines), all MNCs based in the country. Having been assessed and certified, the Investors in People are privileged to maintain the IIP seal of excellence for three years.

The Investors in People Certification is an international quality standard focused on people. It recognizes employers that have boosted the performance of their organization through the way they manage and develop their employees. They have demonstrated consistent commitment to people development as a way of delivering its organization's goals.

The Investors in People Standard is designed as a tool to improve business performance and competitiveness, by providing a framework for best practice in human resource development. Companies which have achieved the Standard have gone through a process based on three principles, namely: Plan - Developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation; Do – Taking action to improve the performance of the organisation; and Review - Evaluating the impact on the performance of the organisation.

The Investors in People Standard has started to become a central part of the United Kingdom's workforce strategy 15 years ago, to meet the increasing business competition both at home and from overseas. The Investors in People Standard was introduced in 1991 in the UK as a framework to help companies succeed and compete through improved people performance. Now, the Standard has achieved remarkable success with more than 60,000 recognized and committed companies throughout the UK and 1,000 organizations from 35 countries in Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Studies have shown that Investors in People is proven to boost bottom line performance.

In the Philippines, the Investors in People Certification was introduced by the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) in 2005, a professional association that advances the science and the art of human resource management. PMAP, under the quality supervision of Investors in People-United Kingdom (IIPUK) and through the funding support of EU Asia-Invest Programme, has the responsibility for administering the Standard in the Philippines, driving forward its progress through national promotion, monitoring for quality and ensuring its continued relevance as a business improvement tool.

The ten Philippine Investors in People have started working with PMAP and IIPUK to share their expertise with other employers through a series of best practice sharing activities, designed to promote effective alignment of people development with business strategies. The activities include mentoring, forums, benchmarking meetings, among others.

Businesses wishing to contact any of the Investors in People (IIP) in the Philippines or requiring further information should call 726-1581/88, visit www.pmap.org.ph/ www.investorsinpeople.co.uk or email iip-phils@pmap.org.ph/ reyah.masalunga@pmap.org.ph.

You are gone...
But for us you never left...
GOD has you in His keeping
We have you in our hearts... FOREVER

Basilisa Vasquez Garena

of Boac, Marinduque
and Sampaloc, Manila

Peacefully joined her Creator on January 1, 2007 at the age of 75.

Her bereaved family: *husband* – **Juanito**; *children* – **Veronica** and **Dante**, **Norman** (✝) and **Annie**, **Heinrich** and **Annie**, **Rachel** and **Albert**, and **Antoneitte** and **Rommel**; *grandchildren* – **Jayvee**, **Gavee**, **Mika**, **Naveen** and **Agatha**; *brothers and sisters* – **Manuel** (✝) and **Rosita**, **Remedios** (✝) and **Lauro** (✝), **Justo** (✝) and **Felisa**, **Soledad** and **Ildefonso**, **Rosita** (✝) and **Ted**, **Francisco** (✝) and **Evangeline**, and **Nilda** and **Fidel**; and all her nephews, nieces, grandchildren and relatives request all pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz in Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 6, 2007 at the Loyola Memorial Park – Marikina after the 8:00 a.m. Holy Mass.

Death Notices

ROBERT R. NATIVIDAD

Died on Jan. 2, 2007 at the age of 65.

His body lies in state at CRUZADA CHURCH OF CHRIST, Cruzada cor Legarda Sts., Manila.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 6, 2007 at 5:00 a.m. at the Manila North Cemetery, Manila.

— oOo —

VENUS DOMINGO BALANE

Peacefully joined her Creator on January 2, 2007.

Her remains lie in state at Capilla del Señor, Santuario de San Antonio. Mass and funeral will be at 2:00 p.m. today, January 4, 2007.

> **"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."**
>
> — 2 Corinthians 5:8

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BUSINESS

Gov't seeks $300M in grants from US

Teves optimistic, says no fallout from Smith case

By Michelle V. Remo

THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION wants to get a grant worth as much as $300 million from the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) of the United States government this year to help fund operations of various line agencies.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the Philippine government was working to increase the grant it receives from the US government's MCA, adding that such a move should have no political consequences.

Teves said specifically that Malacañang's backing of the transfer of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US custody was not a requirement to get a bigger grant from the US government.

Teves said the Arroyo administration last year got about $21 million from the MCA, which is a grant administered by the US government's Millennium Challenge Corp.

MCC handles grants specifically for poor and developing countries.

The $300-million grant sought by the government was on top of grants received from other US-based organizations, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Teves said the Philippines could get a bigger amount if it implements its programs on governance reform, especially in the area of corruption control.

One of the criteria for getting a bigger grant from the US' MCC is effective anti-corruption drive, he noted.

Teves also said that the Philippines should graduate from the "threshold" to the "compact" category of the foreign funding agency to get as much as $300 million in grants from the MCC.

He said Ghana was recently moved up and classified under the "compact" category, and consequently got $300 million from the US government's MCC.

"If Ghana was able to do it, I see no reason why the Philippines cannot," Teves said.

The $21 million that the Philippines received from the MCC last year was used to fund the operations of the Office of the Ombudsman, and to support the Run After the Smugglers program of the Bureau of Customs, the Run After Tax Evaders of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Revenue Integrity Protection Service of the Department of Finance.

Teves sees no fallout from the unpopular decision of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to support the transfer of Smith.

Smith was convicted last year of raping the Filipina named "Nicole," and he was transferred late last year from the Makati City jail to the custody of the US Embassy.

Accused of betraying the interest of her country, Ms Arroyo sought for public understanding of Malacañang's decision, which she said was made to prevent further deterioration of the Philippines' ties with the United States.

DOE pushes clean energy bill

By Abigail L. Ho

FOLLOWING THE PASSAGE OF THE BIOFUels Bill, the Department of Energy will now push for the passage of the Renewable Energy Bill to entice investors to infuse much needed cash into the capital-intensive geothermal energy sector.

"We're looking forward to the Renewable Energy Bill because included there are provisions that are tailor-fit for geothermal energy projects," Energy Undersecretary Guillermo Balce said.

Under the Renewable Energy Bill, geothermal resources will be classified as mineral resources, allowing 100-percent foreign owned companies to undertake geothermal resource development, he said.

The passage of the bill, he added, would help the DOE get investors interested in the geothermal sites that were currently being offered under the 2006 Philippine Energy Contracting Round (PECR 2006).

The DOE, under the PECR 2006, is offering various petroleum blocks, coal areas and geothermal sites for development.

For the geothermal sector, the DOE has pinpointed three areas for exploration, development and direct utilization for power generation and other geothermal applications.

These areas, with a combined potential of around 100 megawatts (MW), are located in Mabini in Batangas, Biliran in Biliran Province and Amacan in Compostela Valley.

LBP, DBP eyed as conduit banks

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE WILL tap Land Bank of the Philippines and Development Bank of the Philippines as conduits for some P2 billion in agriculture modernization funds.

According to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap, the so-called Agriculture Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (Acef) collected by the Bureau of Customs as quota tariff revenues from the importation of agricultural commodities through the minimum access volume (MAV), would be placed in the banks.

"We are negotiating with LandBank and DBP if they could use the initial P2 billion derived from Acef as leverage and see if they could double or triple it upon lending to qualified agricultural cooperatives and agribusiness firms," Yap said in an interview.

The Acef is one of the safety nets that the government put in place to cushion the initial adverse effects of free trade.

Among the programs that would benefit from the Acef fund loans are food programs like the GMA-Rice Program, GMA-Corn program, and high-value crops production programs.

Other projects are irrigation, farm-to-market roads, post-harvest equipment and facilities, credit, and research and development.

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CHANGING FORTUNES. Customers patiently wait their turn at the busy counter of the SM Makati currency exchange center. The peso closed yesterday at 48.88 against the US dollar. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

New Year ushers prosperity for Mindanao

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

THE MINDANAO SUPER Region project is a strategy to push Mindanao's peace and development plans.

It is supported by the Confederation of Governors, City Mayors, and Municipal Mayors League Presidents in Mindanao (CONFED) and other Mindanao leaders, to move the various mega projects, which President Arroyo highlighted in her last State of the Nation Address.

Mindanao's six regional development councils have come up with around P215 billion worth of projects for Mindanao, which were drawn from a "wish list" of projects from Mindanao's local government units, coordinated by their respective regional development councils.

Six strategies

The implementers have identified six strategies that cover major development needs of Mindanao.

These are: Realize Mindanao's agribusiness and aquaculture/mariculture potential; establish an efficient food logistics system linking Mindanao to Manila; improve Mindanao's image to attract more Investments, trade and tourism; pursue responsible mineral development; uplift social development conditions; and build on strong partnerships.

Around 42.27 percent of the investment requirement or P90.74 billion is earmarked for "realizing Mindanao's agribusiness and aquaculture, and mariculture potentials."

Around 36.24 percent or P77.8 billion is eyed for projects to attract more investors.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is expected to start by March its massive earth-moving activities on a 117.30-kilometer coastal road that will connect the towns of Sibuco, Siraway, Siocon, Baliguian and Gutalac in Zamboanga del Norte.

When completed in October 2009, this P1.326-billion project is seen to improve peace and order in Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur.

The construction of the P2.065-billion Awang-Upi-Lebak road in Maguindanao province is expected to start in April 2007 and is due for completion in November 2009, as the detailed engineering design and the procurement for civil works were completed as early as September 2006.

Road projects

The national government will improve a 15-km road in Dinagat Island, Surigao del Norte, for P100 million, to provide accessibility between the urban and rural centers.

Construction is expected to start in April 2007 and is due for completion after seven months.

The Surigao-Davao Coastal Road, runs from Bacuag, Surigao del Norte to Mati, Davao Oriental and bisects Surigao del Sur.

It is a P6.278-billion project, with World Bank shouldering 60 percent of the cost, with the rest to be shouldered by the national government.

The Manay-Mati (Davao Oriental) section is already 59.3 percent complete; full-blast operations in all the four other sections are expected to start in the early part of 2007, and are due for completion by August 2010.

In the Zamboanga peninsula, the 10.8-km Dapitan City-Dakak road shall be widened at a cost of P210 million.

Civil works are expected to start in April 2007 and finish by August 2009.

The project is expected to propel the development of tourism in the area and provide a wider market for marine agriculture products.

"In a bid to cut travel time between Tubod, Lanao del Norte and Tangub City by two hours and 30 minutes, the government is now trying to fund the two-kilometer bridge across Panguil Bay. This project is expected to cost P2.7-billion and will be implemented through public-private partnership," the report said.

To summarize: "Of the P90.74 billion proposed projects for realizing Mindanao's agribusiness, aquaculture, and mariculture potentials, 68.12 percent or P61.8 billion is for road network improvement.

Around P17 billion for irrigation development, P7.7 billion for agrarian reform projects, P3 billion for environment protection, P612 million for agri-processing and business center, P401 million for fishery development, and P119 million for agriculture development."

About 11.1 percent, or P23.8 billion, of the investment requirement is committed to establishing an efficient food logistics and system linking Mindanao to Manila. Of this budget, P20.7 billion is for support infrastructure and utilities while P3.104 billion is for food processing and consolidation.

Proposed projects for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) also account for P12 billion of the "catch-up plan" to realize the ARMM's development needs.

The budget is allocated to the following: agribusiness and aquaculture potential (P3.17 billion), improving accessibility to production (P5 billion), enticing investments in ARMM Area (P1.45 billion), improvement of ports and airports (P1.24 billion), uplifting social concerns (P1.21 billion) and other peace and development (P30 million).

Only 3.9 percent of the proposed projects is directed at improving education and other social development conditions.

Projects for peace

Meanwhile, around P2 billion projects are proposed for capability, peace building and in information and communications technology.

A total of P234 million in projects are proposed to pursue responsible mining in Mindanao.

Power projects mostly for generation and transmission would total around P43 billion, with P25.3 billion designated for support infrastructure network while around P9.4 billion worth of projects are proposed for tourism development.

"Around P1.95 billion worth of projects are proposed "to build strong partnerships" in Mindanao such as resolving boundary conflict for peace and development in Mindanao, among others. Around P8.3 billion are proposed to uplift social development conditions such as education, with P1.19 billion worth of proposed projects, flood control to protect life and property (P4.53 billion), expanded medical and health care, (P2.29 billion), child and maternal care (P126 million), and other welfare projects (P75 million)."

The construction of the P5.386-billion Laguindingan Airport Development Project in Misamis Oriental, scheduled for completion in mid-May 2007, is hoped to increase Northern Mindanao's capabilities on job generation, economic opportunities, sociopolitical stability and to ensure a better quality of life for its residents.

The airport project would enable the region to handle international flights by wide-bodied aircraft, with a proposed new runway about 2.1 km long and 45 m wide, along with a state-of-the-art passenger terminal building that could cater to 1.2 million passengers annually.

Shoreline protection structures are also scheduled to be built in the Dipolog City Airport starting this month, estimated to cost around P115 million.

Similar airport improvement projects will also be carried out in the cities of Pagadian, Cotabato, Butuan, Ozamis and Cagayan de Oro, and Zamboanga, amounting to P1.35 billion.

These projects are seen to increase the level of trade, tourism and investments within the subregional economic growth area of the East Asean region.

Some of the airports will be able to improve their capabilities to handle night and extreme weather landings.

10-point agenda

All of these ambitious and impressive projects are within the framework of the Arroyo administration's 10-point agenda and are recommended by the regional development councils.

The presence of the Mindanao Economic Development Council as a coordinating body will ensure the timely implementation of all of these plans.

The renewed and heightened optimism on Mindanao's ability to launch greater socioeconomic take-off is shown, amid challenges, with the birth of the super regions project.

The national government's solid backing of Mindanawans' efforts to generate peace and development for everyone, will no doubt lead to progress and transformation.

Mindanao is the land of promise, and the full implementation of the Mindanao super regions project will lead to the fulfillment of that promise.

(Joji Ilagan Bian is an advocate for Mindanao; Chair, Mindanaworld Foundation Inc; Mindanao TVET; Mindanao Rep, Export Development Council; Chair, Joji Ilagan Foundation; Former Chair of the Mindanao Business Council. Email comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

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IN THIS ISSUE

▨ **Mile-high dining** /C4

LIFESTYLE

Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

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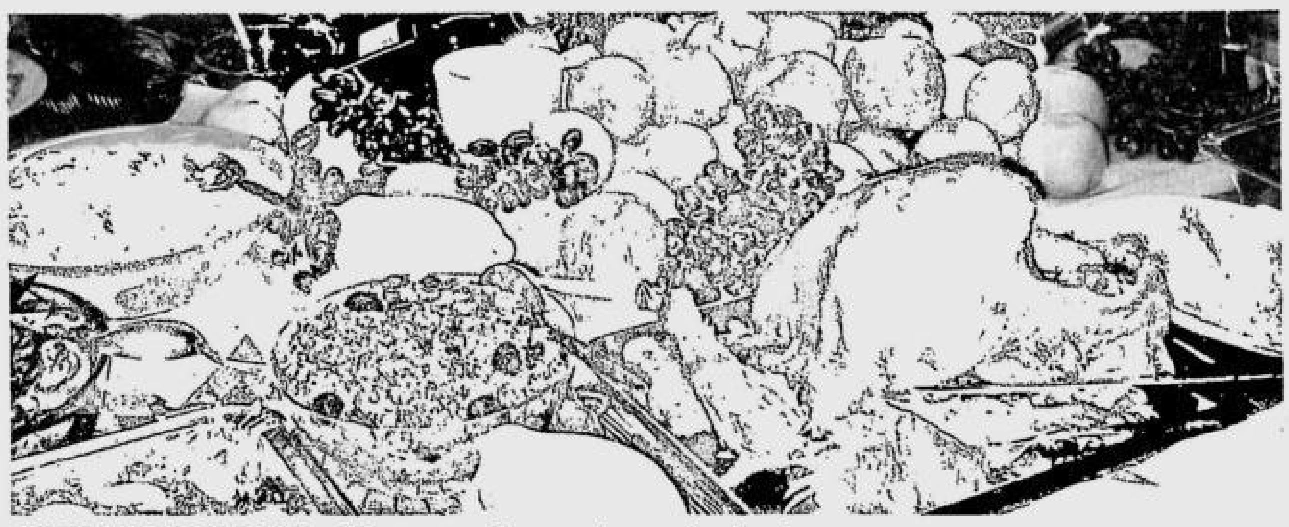
COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

Renew and recycle



CHRISTMAS FEAST. Holiday dishes get a welcome makeover the day after.

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS, though we are expected to be sick and tired of food, we still look forward to more but it has to be different from the feasting menu.

In my family, the anticipation begins right away. On the evening of Christmas day, everyone knows there will be fish *sinigang*. The hot broth will be welcome because it is light and sour, so different from the rich flavors that linger in the mouth and contribute to the feeling of satiety.

Together with the expensive seafood bought for the festive table, there will also be everyday fish such as *bangus*. It waits to be cooked in vinegar, again the sour flavor something to look forward to. There will be *daing*, butterfly-cut milkfish marinated in ,vinegar, garlic, salt and crushed black pepper then fried.

But the prized items are dried and smoked fish.

The smell of *tuyo* perks up the spirit. Picking on every piece is a post-holiday rite. Which is why the bottled *tuyo* pieces, already shorn of bones and swimming in oil, just doesn't do it for me.

Dried fish can also be *daing*, the generic term that covers all kinds of fish, but only here in Luzon. Some years back I wrote about a lesson on dried fish in the Carigara, Leyte, market.

The generic name in Binisaya for all salted fish is *guinamos*. Now the differences lie in how long the fish is salted and whether it is dried under the sun or not at all.

If the fish is salted and dried under the sun for a long time, it is called *barol*. If it's dried for a short time only, it's called *palatinupsan*. The flesh is more tender than *barol* and, for me, has a lot more flavor.

Salted but not dried

Salted fish that isn't dried but made to sit for as long as overnight is called *banaw*.

In Negros Oriental, fresh fish that is packed in salt sometimes for a year is called *buro*. When it emerges, it still looks fresh. The favored way of cooking is to boil the *buro* in coconut milk.

Whether *daing*, *tuyo*, *buro* or *guinamos*, the necessary dipping sauce is vinegar, plain or spiked with chili or flavored with garlic. The salted fish will always be great with sliced tomatoes and rice, whether steamed or fried.

But holidays will always have my refrigerator and freezer groaning with leftovers. Over the next few weeks, emptying it will require some creativity.

The best known recycled dish is *paksiw na lechon*. There are two versions, however. In Luzon where *lechon* is always served with liver sauce, the *paksiw* includes the sauce making the mixture a bit sweetish and thick.

I prefer the Visayan *paksiw* that employs the same recipe sans the liver sauce. Both ways make the *lechon* totally different from its original cooking, tenderizing the skin (what survives the picking when the *lechon* is first served) and making edible *lechon* parts not usually eaten like the pig's head, feet and tail.

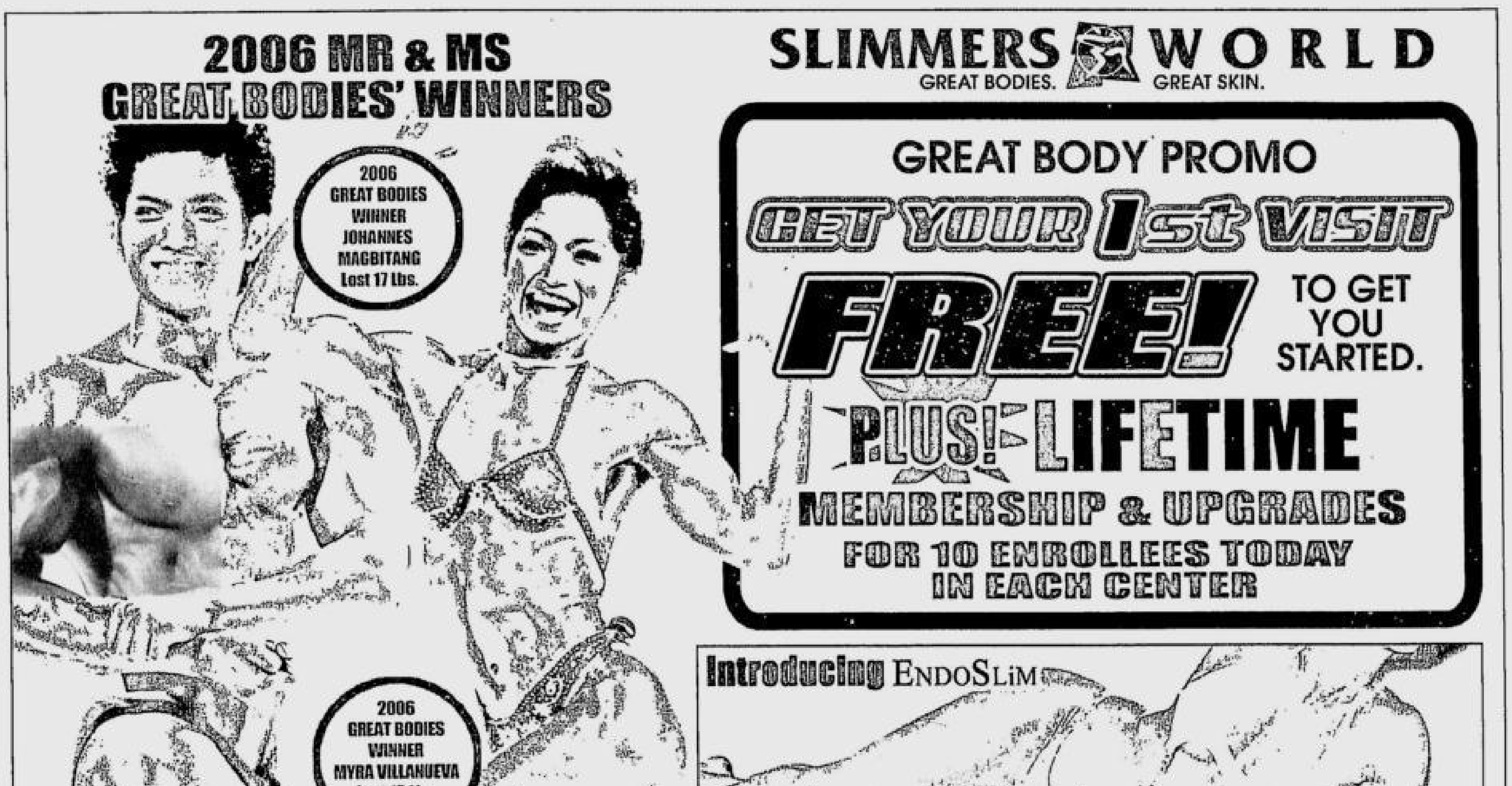
Roast chicken or turkey can be combined with *chorizo*, some leftover hot dog or ham and made into pastel, that is, if you didn't have that for the holiday feasting.

Once, no one wanted to eat the turkey drumsticks. They ended up in the *arroz caldo*, the best because the resulting rice soup was the most flavorful, according to my son.

Pasta soup

My grandmother told me that turkey carcass could be boiled, removed from the broth and the small pieces of meat picked from it. The pieces would then be returned to the

RENEW/ C3



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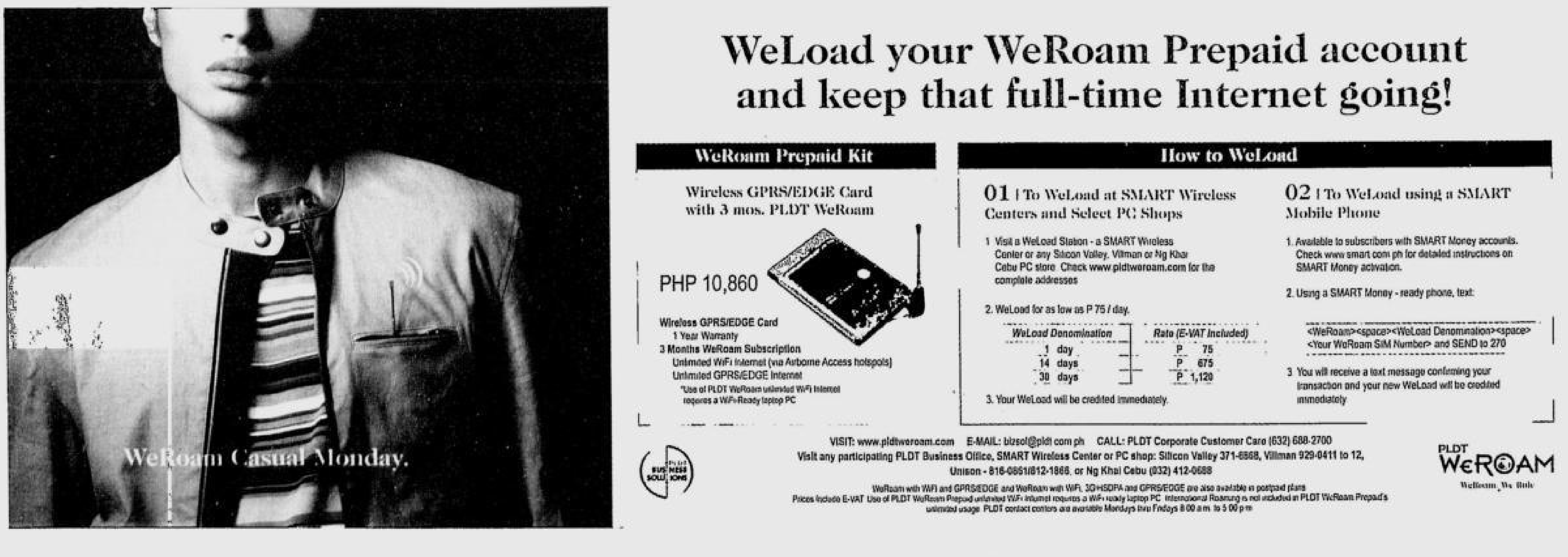

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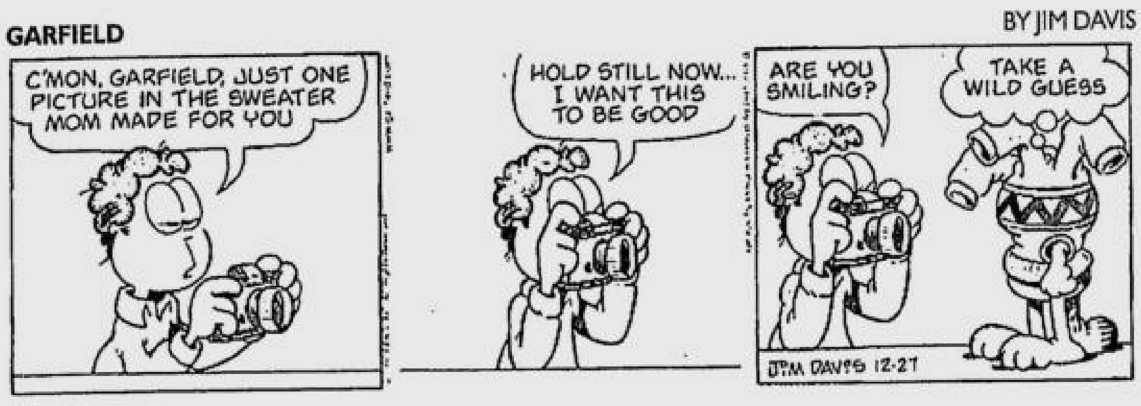
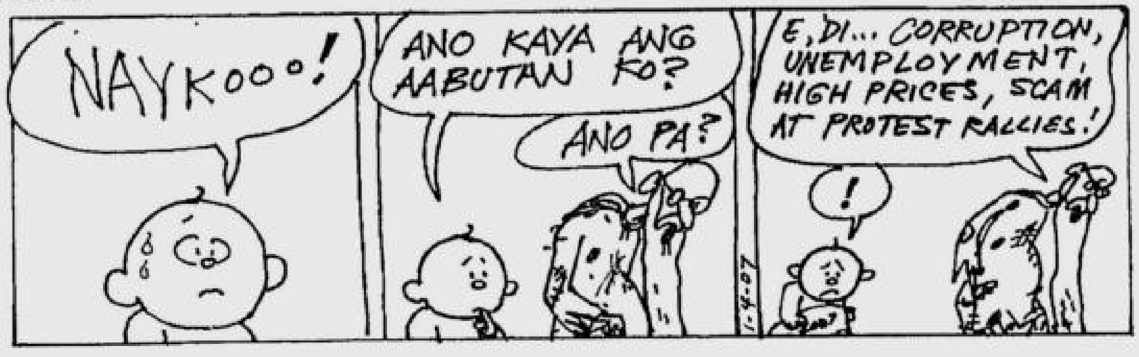
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


C'MON, GARFIELD, JUST ONE PICTURE IN THE SWEATER MOM MADE FOR YOU
HOLD STILL NOW... I WANT THIS TO BE GOOD
ARE YOU SMILING?
TAKE A WILD GUESS
JIM DAVIS 12-27

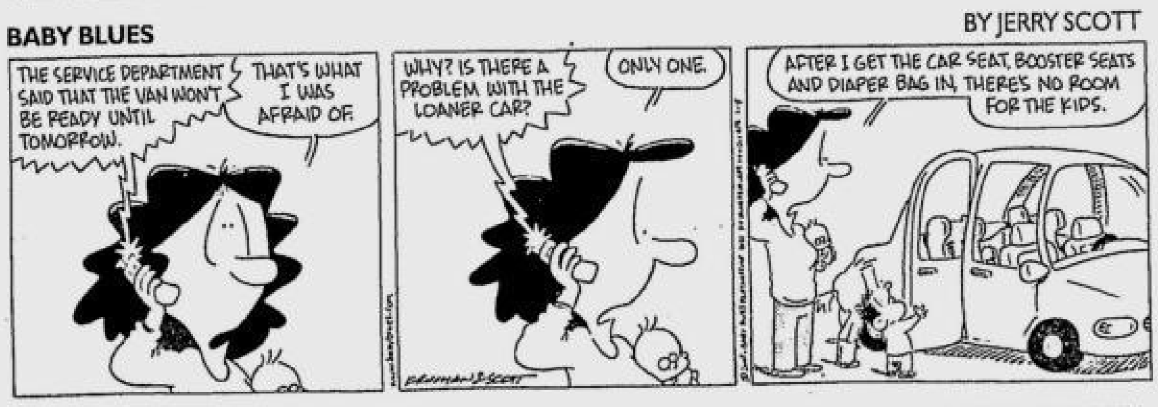
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NAYKOOO!
ANO KAYA ANG AABUTAN KO?
ANO PA?
E, DI... CORRUPTION, UNEMPLOYMENT, HIGH PRICES, SCAM AT PROTEST RALLIES!
!
1-4-07

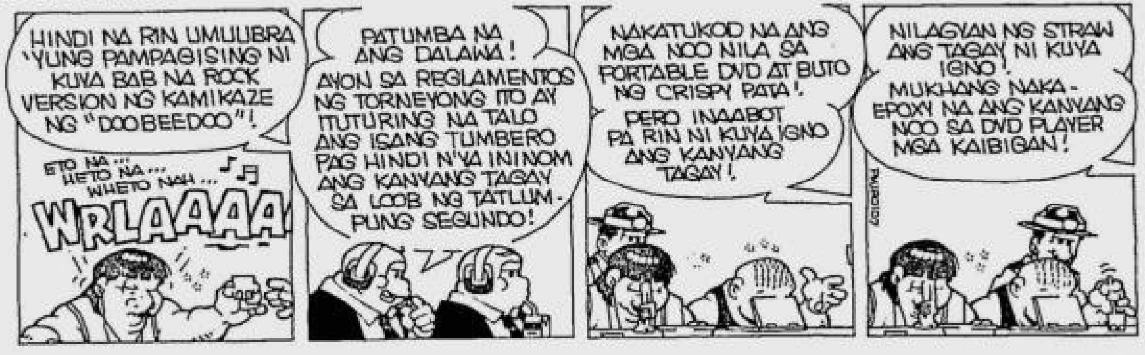
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


THE SERVICE DEPARTMENT SAID THAT THE VAN WON'T BE READY UNTIL TOMORROW.
THAT'S WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF.
WHY? IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH THE LOANER CAR?
ONLY ONE.
AFTER I GET THE CAR SEAT, BOOSTER SEATS AND DIAPER BAG IN, THERE'S NO ROOM FOR THE KIDS.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

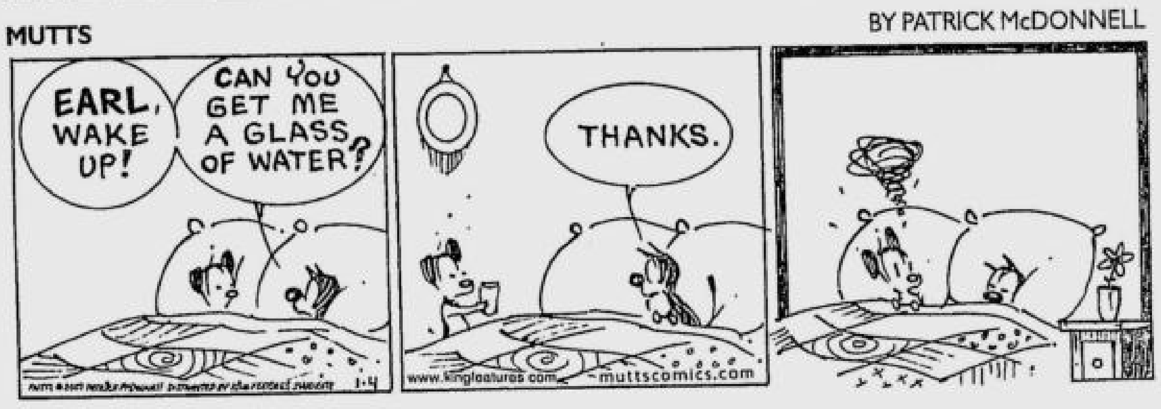
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


HINDI NA RIN UMUUBRA 'YUNG PAMPAGISING NI KUYA BAB NA ROCK VERSION NG KAMIKAZE NG "DOOBEEDOO"!
ETO NA... HETO NA... WHETO NAH...
WRLAAAA!
PATUMBA NA ANG DALAWA! AYON SA REGLAMENTOS NG TORNEYONG ITO AY ITUTURING NA TALO ANG ISANG TUMBERO PAG HINDI N'YA ININOM ANG KANYANG TAGAY SA LOOB NG TATLUMPUNG SEGUNDO!
NAKATUKOD NA ANG MGA NOO NILA SA PORTABLE DVD AT BUTO NG CRISPY PATA!
PERO INAABOT PA RIN NI KUYA IGNO ANG KANYANG TAGAY!
NILAGYAN NG STRAW ANG TAGAY NI KUYA IGNO!
MUKHANG NAKA-EPOXY NA ANG KANYANG NOO SA DVD PLAYER NGA KAIBIGAN!

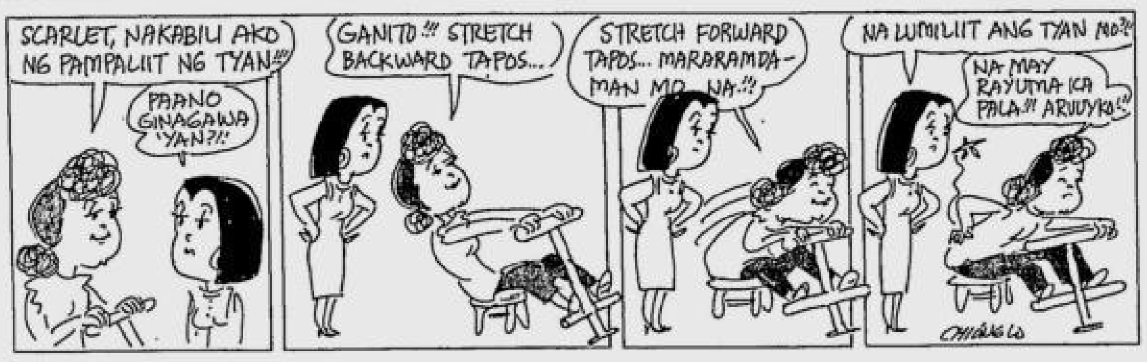
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


EARL, WAKE UP!
CAN YOU GET ME A GLASS OF WATER?
THANKS.
www.kingfeatures.com
muttscomics.com
1-4

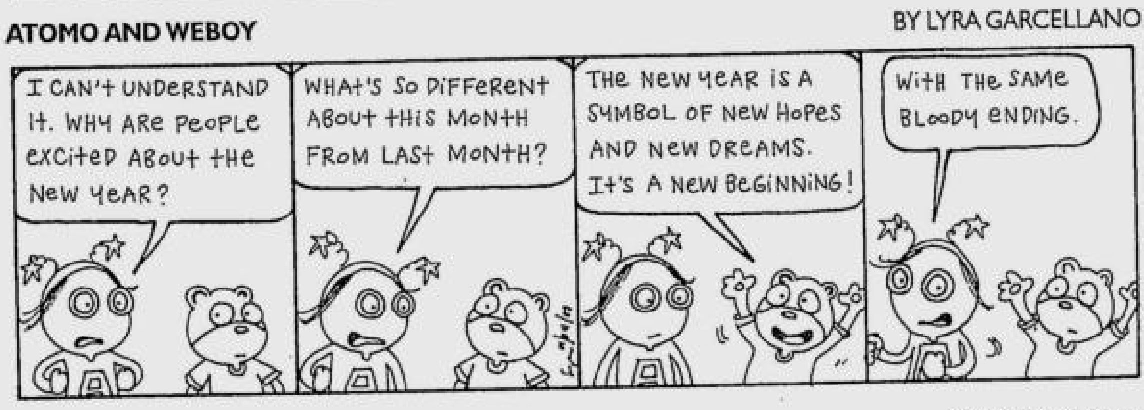
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SCARLET, NAKABILI AKO NG PAMPALIIT NG TYAN!!!
PAANO GINAGAWA 'YAN?!!
GANITO!!! STRETCH BACKWARD TAPOS...
STRETCH FORWARD TAPOS... MARARAMDAMAN MO NA!!!
NA LUMILIIT ANG TYAN MO?!
NA MAY RAYUMA KA PALA!!! ARUUYKO!!
CHIONGLO

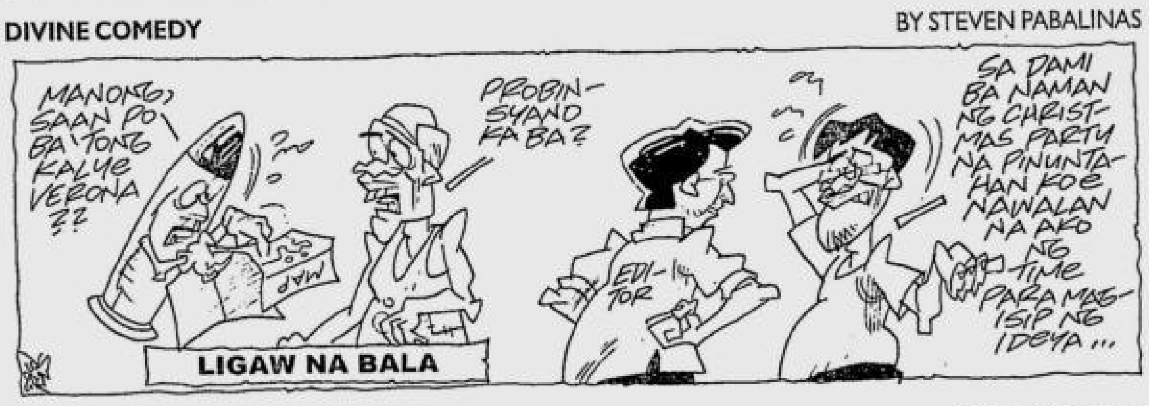
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT. WHY ARE PEOPLE EXCITED ABOUT THE NEW YEAR?
WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS MONTH FROM LAST MONTH?
THE NEW YEAR IS A SYMBOL OF NEW HOPES AND NEW DREAMS. IT'S A NEW BEGINNING!
WITH THE SAME BLOODY ENDING.

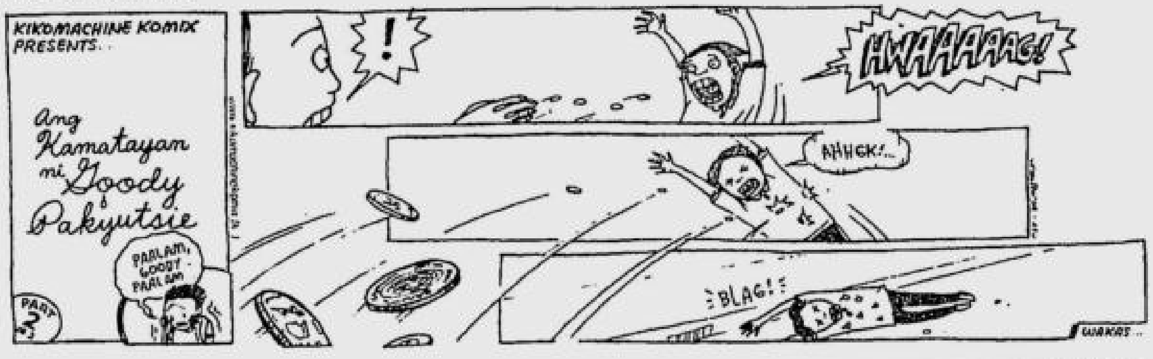
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


MANONG, SAAN PO BA 'TONG KALYE VERONA ??
PROBINSYANO KA BA?
MAP
EDITOR
SA DAMI BA NAMAN NG CHRISTMAS PARTY NA PINUNTAHAN KOE NAWALAN NA AKO NG TIME PARA MAG-ISIP NG IDEYA...
LIGAW NA BALA

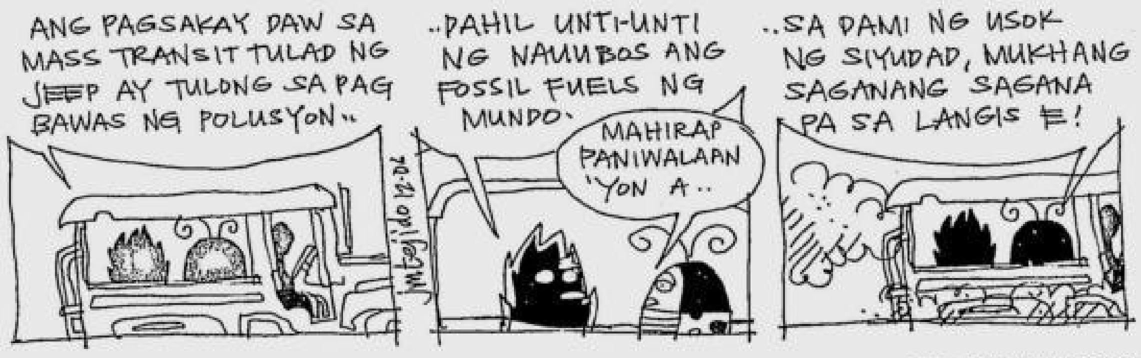
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


KIKOMACHINE KOMIX PRESENTS..
Ang Kamatayan ni Goody Pakyutsie
PAALAM, GOODY PAALAM
PART 3
!
HWAAAAAG!
AHHGK!..
BLAG!
WAKAS..

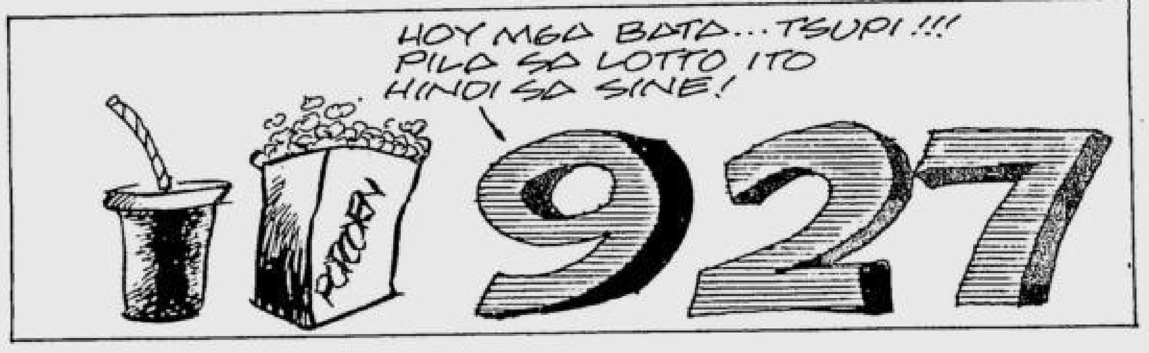
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANG PAGSAKAY DAW SA MASS TRANSIT TULAD NG JEEP AY TULONG SA PAG BAWAS NG POLUSYON..
..DAHIL UNTI-UNTI NG NAUUBOS ANG FOSSIL FUELS NG MUNDO.
MAHIRAP PANIWALAAN 'YON A..
..SA DAMI NG USOK NG SIYUDAD, MUKHANG SAGANANG SAGANA PA SA LANGIS E!
JMTejido 12-06

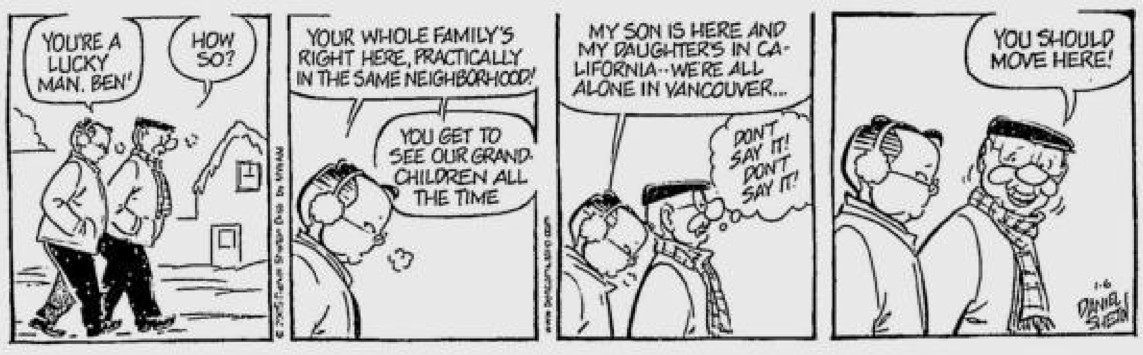
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


HOY MGA BATA... TSUPI!!!
PILA SA LOTTO ITO HINDI SA SINE!
POPCORN
927

BEN

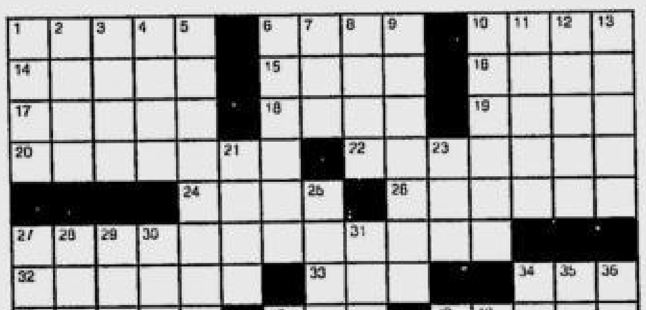
BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN, BEN!
HOW SO?
YOUR WHOLE FAMILY'S RIGHT HERE, PRACTICALLY IN THE SAME NEIGHBORHOOD!
YOU GET TO SEE OUR GRANDCHILDREN ALL THE TIME
MY SON IS HERE AND MY DAUGHTER'S IN CALIFORNIA...WE'RE ALL ALONE IN VANCOUVER...
DON'T SAY IT! DON'T SAY IT!
YOU SHOULD MOVE HERE!
1-6
DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Offer a recap of
6 Lenient
10 Lady's man
14 Related on mother's side
15 Old you
16 Of all time
17 Rose oil
18 You said it!
19 Unvarying
20 Start of Christopher Lasch quote
22 Sonora snoozes
24 Elation
26 Visits dreamland
27 Part 2 of quote
32 Moneylender
33 OSS, today
34 Mayday!
37 Trading centers
38 Part 3 of quote
39 Watered silk
41 Frequently, poetically
42 Instigate litigation
43 Shred
44 Part 4 of quote
47 Scottish beau
50 Big brass?
51 Warned
53 End of quote
58 Actor O'Shea
59 Approximate amounts
61 Soup server
62 Debate side
63 Needle case
64 Provide with a quality
65 Pants part
66 Pro __ (in proportion)
67 Austere

DOWN
1 Writer O'Casey
2 Do-others separator
3 Dillon or Damon
4 Provo's place
5 Closest points in orbits
6 Put on just for show
7 Resistance measurement
8 Adversaries
9 Algeria neighbor
10 Renter
11 Egg-shaped
12 Plan a different route
13 Attire
21 Dodger, in MLB jargon
23 Caribou's cousin
25 Revert to the state
27 Japanese wrestling
28 Service branch
29 Brusque
30 TV component
31 Stretch the truth
34 Builder's office
35 Two-toned treat
36 Feudal peasant
38 Cal. abbr.
39 Handcuffs
40 Stock-market abbr.
42 Radar gun's target
43 No-no
44 Deft
45 Natural cavity
46 Moscow's place
47 Tibetan monks
48 Letter-shaped skirt?
49 Greek letter
52 Computer fodder
54 Quitter's word
55 Sturluson saga
56 Utter indistinctly
57 Try to find
60 On the contrary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By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

1/4/07

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

P	A	C	T		N	A	G	S		R	O	B	O	T
I	G	O	R		A	C	R	E		A	D	O	B	E
N	A	N	A		C	H	U	G		D	I	N	E	R
		F	I	S	H	Y	B	U	S	I	N	E	S	S
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S	H	A	D	Y	D	E	A	L	I	N	G	S		
T	E	P	E	E		T	R	O	D		R	O	L	L
E	R	A	S	E		R	I	P	E		E	N	O	S
R	I	S	K	S		O	N	E	S		E	G	A	D

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1/4/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a problem-solver who is quick to understand complicated concepts. (You like systems and are very organized.) You also collect things—objects and information. Your approach to everything is logical and systematic. Family is important; you're a strong and caring parent. Major changes will take place in the coming year, perhaps as significant as in 1998.

Birthdate of: Julia Ormond, actress/activist; Louis Braille, inventor; Michael Stipe, musician.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Surprising news from bosses or parents suddenly opens a new path for you. You see now that you have more opportunities to explore than you thought. Good!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Unexpected news from afar is surprising. You might also have sudden opportunities to travel or get some kind of training or schooling. This will expand your world.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): The wealth and resources of others definitely benefit you now. Don't worry about attached strings. Don't worry about your pride.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You want greater freedom in your relationships. Sure, you have your needs, but you don't want to be a prisoner. You need your space, and so do others.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): New technology related to your job is exciting, but it also involves a learning curve. Scientific advances are convenient, yet they do have their downside.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Saucy flirtations might be exciting now. New love can begin for some of you. Be open to social invitations because they will introduce you to something new and different.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Stock the fridge. Unexpected company could drop by. Impromptu family gatherings will be fun and stimulating! Fix broken appliances at home.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're full of bright ideas today. New faces and acquaintances stimulate your way of looking at things. This makes you excited about new possibilities

SAGITTARIUS: (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might have some good moneymaking ideas. Be aware of new ways of making money or even new job offers. Spontaneous purchases will please you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You feel courageous about exploring new avenues in many areas of your life. Other people enjoy your company because you're lively and entertaining today.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): A breakthrough could yield new solutions to old problems. This is because you're thinking out of the box today. (This is something you're very good at.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Get together with friends or groups. Two heads are better than one, you might see a whole new approach to something that is superior, more exciting and more efficient.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

		2				7		
				5				
4			7		8			3
		1		6		2		
	9		4	8	3		1	
		3		7		6		
8			2		1			5
				3				
		7				4		

Difficulty Level ★★★

1/04

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

3	9	5	7	6	1	2	4	8
1	7	6	2	4	8	3	9	5
4	2	8	5	3	9	6	1	7
9	5	2	1	7	3	4	8	6
7	3	1	4	8	6	9	5	2
8	6	4	9	5	2	1	7	3
2	8	7	3	1	4	5	6	9
5	4	9	6	2	7	8	3	1
6	1	3	8	9	5	7	2	4

Difficulty Level ★★★

THE CONSUMER

ATM isn't connected to a police hotline

By Linda B. Bolido

FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED SO, AS we start a new year, I am sharing with you some new scams.

An e-mail has been circulating saying you can notify the police that someone is forcing you to withdraw money from an automated teller machine (ATM) simply by keying in your personal identification number (PIN) backward.

That is, if your PIN is 1234, you enter 4321 to let the police know someone is being robbed at a particular machine.

The e-mail says, "The ATM recognizes that your pin number is backwards from the ATM card you placed in the machine. The machine will still give you the money you requested but, unknown to the robber, the police will be immediately dispatched to help you."

To give the information some credibility, the e-mail goes on to say, "This information was recently broadcasted (*sic*) on TV and it states that it is seldom used because people don't know it exists."

Well, it is seldom, rather, never used because it is not true. If you enter your PIN backward, the machine will simply cancel the transaction, in which case you might even be at risk if the robber is violent. Bank people would not even show up, much less the police.

There is no such ATM that alerts the police, not here or anywhere else.

Banking industries in the Asia-Pacific had confirmed the e-mail is a hoax. We thank Citibank for alerting us to this scam.

American 'dugo-dugo'

One scam that was really on television recently, "Inside Edition Investigates," is an American version of the Pinoy *dugo-dugo*.

It may be worth mentioning because, with fewer and fewer people being taken in by the old *dugo-dugo* scam, "creative" hoaxers may decide to copy the American version or adapt it to the local situation.

According to the report, somebody would call senior citizens claiming to be their grandchild.

Knowing the close ties between grandparents and grandchildren, the felons know it will be hard for the old people to refuse to help.

The caller does not give a name. He leaves it to the old people to mention a name.

A typical call goes, "Hi grandpa! You know who this is?" The old man replies, "Chris, is that you?" Keep in mind the hearing of elderly people is usually not as sharp as before.

The caller then says, "That's right, grandpa, your favorite grandson" and proceeds with his spiel usually about being in an accident and having to pay hospital bills or car towing fees.

He then asks for money to pay for the expenses. The doting grandparents oblige only to find out later that the real grandchild never made the call.

The felons use the phonebook to find their "mark," choosing old-fashioned names believing, correctly in many cases, that those people would be elderly.

With money transfers getting easier through ATM, mobile phones, Moneygram, etc., felons are coming up with more inventive ways to part the unwary from his/her hard-earned money.

Short-changed?

Conrado M. Javier of Parañaque City complains about being asked to use in one transaction the full amount of the P500 gift certificate (GC) his son purchased as a birthday present.

We will not mention the name of the establishment yet as we have already referred the complaint to them and we are awaiting their reply.

Actually this is the policy of many establishments. I know of only one commercial establishment that lets you use your GC again regardless of the balance remaining—Rustan's.

The reader said his purchase, using the GC, was only worth P450 but "I was surprised to learn from the cashier that I had to consume the entire value of the certificate... or forfeit whatever change [was] due me."

He said he asked the cashier if he could just get a credit memo for the balance of P50 that he could use for another purchase later, but was refused.

A talk with the branch supervisor got him the same response.

The reader wonders why the entire value of a GC has to be used up in a single transaction. "I was not asking for a refund. I merely wanted a credit memo for P50 [balance for] use... later.

The reader said the store already received the full value of the P500 amount of the GC so it would not be losing a centavo from the transaction.

"This policy is arbitrary, dictatorial and grossly disadvantageous to the consumer" as the balance was forfeited in favor of the establishment.

Atching Curing's heavenly 'tibok-tibok'

By Dely P. Fernandez

(Editor's Note: One of six winners in this year's Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing Awards, this essay was written by Dely Fernandez who serves her favorite food at her Azure Café in Makati. Her daughter, Yvette Fernandez, won first place in last year's contest.)

ATCHING CURING WAS A teenager, only a few years older than my sister and me, when my mother first introduced her to us as a part-time member of our household. She was a distant relation who lived with the nuns of Asilo de San Vicente, an orphanage. She could barely read or write, but she was an industrious girl, helping the nuns with their crocheting and cooking and whatever it is nuns do.

Atchi (elder sister) was not an orphan. She was at the Asilo to learn the arts of a dutiful daughter. Her father, Kong Adong, was a *palsunero*, a respected figure in the barrio. He was the head farmer who dealt with the landowner in securing funds for the *tanam* (planting), the *pupul* (harvest) and the *kabyo* (milling season), back in the days when farmers still tilled the land and planted sugarcane. Her mother was the gentle Apung Tikang, the originator of recipes for *kakanin* and other good things Atchi made that we all loved so much.

Rich delicacy

One of her specialties was what we Kapampangans call *tibok-tibok*, a luxuriously rich delicacy made of pure carabao milk from the farm and coconut milk from the trees that abound. People from Manila have a similar dessert they call *maja blanca*. Still, Atchi's *tibok-tibok* was by far better than any version that suffered from quick substitutes like cornstarch, pasteurized fresh milk or canned Carnation evap.

Rice, the binding ingredient of her *tibok-tibok*, was soaked overnight in a little water after which it was finely pulverized in a stone *gilingan*. Early the next morning a young houseboy clambered up the tall trees, brought down coconuts and split their shells open. He sat on a low stool, grating the white coconut meat, avoiding the husks.

Atchi wrapped the boy's coconut meat in water-soaked pieces of *katsa* (muslin cloth), squeezing out the rich cream—*unang piga* (literally the "first squeeze")—which she set aside to make the *latik* topping. To the grated coconut, she added more water and squeezed thinner milk through the *katsa* into a huge copper vat. Then she poured in *gatas damulag* (carabao milk), the ground rice, and white sugar, which she then stirred for hours and hours over a charcoal stove. Once the *tibok-tibok* mixture was thick and smooth, she poured it into banana-leaf-lined *bilaos*.

DELY P. Fernandez

Then she retrieved the *unang piga* and stirred it in another *kawali* (frying pan) until the oil oozed out. When the oil finally separated from the coconut meat, it left a delicate, golden-colored residue called *latik*. Atchi sprinkled *latik* over the *tibok-tibok*. When cooled the luscious pudding-like *tibok-tibok* was eagerly spooned in generous portions onto our plates. We enjoyed it with *salabat* (ginger brew) for afternoon *merienda*, and as a mainstay on our Noche Buena table after Christmas midnight Mass.

Sweet curdled milk

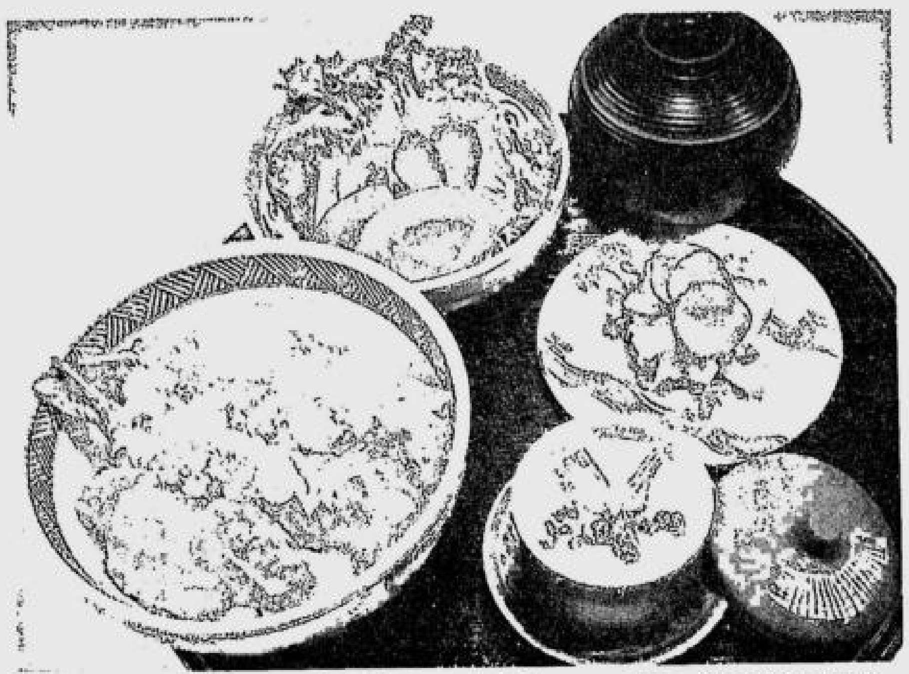
Another heirloom recipe she shared was her famous *mayumung gatas*. She added a few spoonfuls of cane vinegar to fresh carabao milk in order to curdle it. Sugar was poured in, and the mixture stirred continuously for hours in copper vats until it formed a thick confection. My father would eat a spoonful of *mayumu*, and with a satisfied "Ahhhh!" declare his meal complete. We children preferred the smoother, vinegar-less candy version of carabao milk that is called *pastillas de leche*, each morsel wrapped in thin, lacelike Japanese paper.

When we got older and my sister married, she invited Atching Curing to move in. Atchi lived with her for 40 years—as cook, *mayordoma*, all-around trusted housekeeper, surrogate mother to my sister's children, and later on, surrogate grandmother to the children's children.

One sad morning not very long ago, Atching Curing was found unconscious in the bathroom. She lay in a coma for days. The grandchildren were inconsolable. They had always thought Atchi would live forever. My sister's family sat at Atchi's bedside for days, saddened by her condition. Then one night, she appeared in a dream and said she was being called to heaven to join their grandfather who missed her cooking in heaven. That was when the family finally accepted that Atchi had to leave, and bid her farewell. They all agreed that Lolo needed her more than they did. Today, whenever we pass on treasured recipes from one generation to the next, and whenever we dine together on *tibok-tibok* or *mayumung gatas*, our beloved Atching Curing lives on.

DINING OUT

STEAMED Lobster from Fish & Co.



TANABE'S Bento Box consists of soup, salad, rice, vegetables, side dishes, main course and dessert.

Two new dishes for 2007

FISH & CO. STARTS THE NEW YEAR WITH the introduction of two new dishes—Steamed Lobster and Seafood Bisque. The tomato-based Seafood Bisque has a mixture of fresh crabmeat, dory fish and prawn drizzled with a roux of heavy cream. The Steamed Lobster is served with garlic and thyme-scented roasted potatoes. Other Fish & Co. popular dishes the hot and fiery Sambal Prawns, Fish Burger, Periperi Prawns, Whole Line Fish and Fish & Chips. Visit Fish & Co. restaurants at Greenbelt 3 (tel. 7297431 to 32) and Shangri-La Plaza Mall (9102140 and 42). Another branch will open soon at SM Mall of Asia.

BUBBA GUMP Shrimp Co. in Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center Makati, may be the place to visit after a hard day at the office or just to hang out with friends. Its large servings of Southern and Cajun-style dishes are ideal for sharing with friends or family. For appetizers, try the Run Across America Sampler, an assortment of Far Out Dip and Chips, Chilly Shrimp, spicy Chicken Strips, Hush Pups, and Mama Blue's Fried Shrimp. Entrées include Shrimper's Heaven, Shrimp Fajjitas, After the Storm "Bucket of Boat Trash," Forrest's Shrimp Net Catch, Captain's Fish and Chips, and Dixie Style Baby Back Ribs. E-mail customer@bubbagump.com.ph or call 7575154.

TANABE Restaurant has opened a second branch on the second level of the SM Mall of Asia's Entertainment Center facing Manila Bay. Owned by chef Masumi Tanabe the restaurant has an extensive menu that includes Ko-Ebi Karaage (Fried Crispy Small Shrimp), Ika Shumai (Squid Fried Dumpling), Tamagoyaki (Egg Cake), Gyu Negi Maki (Thinly Sliced Beef rolled with Spring Onion inside). It has several tofu dishes, salads and a wide array of sashimi and sushi items. Main course includes Sumiyaki (charcoal grilled), Tempura, Teriyaki, Donburi and Menrui (Japanese noodles). Diners can have Teppan-Yaki à la carte or hotpot cooking. The Bento Box consists of soup, salad, rice, vegetables, side dishes, main course, and dessert. Choices for main course include Nigiri Sushi Kaku Bento (Eight kinds of Nigiri Sushi), Gindara Kaku Bento (Grilled Cad Fish with Teriyaki Sauce), Tempura Kaku Bento (Tempura, Sashimi, Sunomono, Yakimono), Makunouchi Bento (Sashimi, Usuyaki Beef, Tonkatsu, Tamagoyaki, Ebi Fry), and Steak Kaku Bento (Tenderloin Steak, Sashimi, Tempura, Yakimono). The original Tanabe outlet opened three years ago at the Remedios Circle in Malate.

SUPER BOWL of China has Super Offers all throughout the year to help you organize a family get-together or office party with less stress and hassle. Dimsum platters are good for 8-12 persons per order. Try Pork Siomai, Hakao, Deep-fried Wanton, Shanghai Dumplings, Vegetarian Spring Rolls and BBQ Pork Siopao. Also good for 8-12 people are Super Servings. Choose from Deep-fried Cuttlefish with Spicy Salt, Szechuan Scallops, Sliced Beef with Broccoli, Super Bowl Pork Chop, Sweet and Sour Fish Fillet, Lemon Chicken, Szechuan Shrimp and Yang Chow Fried Rice. You may add to your spread Super Bowl Birthday Noodles or Crispy Noodles with Assorted Seafood, among others. For delivery, call 7378888.

THE PENINSULA Manila presents "Hot Off The Grill," its popular Poolside Barbecue Buffet until February, every Friday and Saturday, 6:30-10 p.m. The choice items are Herb and garlic-marinated Lamb Chops, Citrus and pepper-marinated Tuna and Vegetable Skewer, Teriyaki-marinated Beef Mignon, Tandoori-marinated Lapu-Lapu, Wood-smoked Pork Spare Ribs, Cajun-Spiced Beef Burger, Lime-marinated King Prawns and Lobster Tails, Garlic and soy-marinated Chicken Legs, and a variety of Peninsula sausages. New on the list is the Mongolian Grill. Call 8872888 local 6742 or 6745.

BLACKBEARD'S Seafood Island has a special holiday treat. With every order of Boodle Feast (grilled seafood selections with pork belly, vegetables and rice), diners get one order of Kapitan's Mussels for free. A special beer and cocktails promo is available 9 p.m.-2 a.m. daily. Other specialty dishes include Kinilaw, Crabs à la Carte, Oysters and Clams. Branches are at Fiesta Market! Market!, Fort Bonifacio, Global City (tel. 8867692); Araneta Center, Cubao; and 536 Remedios St., Malate, Manila (4009980).

***DAING BIYA*. Salted *biya* sold at Sta. Rosa market**

Renew and recycle

From page C1

broth. With cut vegetables mixed in, the broth would be boiled again with some elbow macaroni. Voila! A pasta vegetable soup.

The same thing can be done with ham bone. If you read old recipe books, ham bones are always used to flavor other dishes. My sister-in-law uses ham bone in her broth when she does *menudo*.

Small slices of ham, roast chicken or turkey end up, together with egg, in fried rice. This seems to be such a big hit with the children and some can't wait to taste the latest version of fried rice at home.

Sometimes, there are more *leche flan* and *halayang ube* than we can consume. We can't wait for summer to do our *halo-halo*. So they end up in the simplest iced mix, sometimes with just beans.

This year, the *halo-halo* will be even richer with the addition of surplus *pastillas de leche*, a version I tasted recently in Arayat, Pampanga. That one was from a *halo-halo* shop called Kabigting, which deserves another column so watch out for that food trek.

Queso de bola leftover is always welcome, some of which will end up as Parmesan substitute in the spaghetti with meat sauce at home. Faye, a friend, sent a text message saying she mixed *queso de bola* cubes with pineapple sauce then popped the concoction into the microwave. She says right after it melts, the cheese tastes like mozzarella but, and here you can hear her chuckling, the gooey cheese becomes chewing gum when it cools.

Recycling makes you appreciate yourself for the creativity but at the same time lets you know the limits of your creation.

E-mail me at pinoyfood04@yahoo.com

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

Catering when the sky is the limit

Young chefs should gain experience in other culinary fields before venturing into airline cooking

I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED how airline kitchens work. I'm an HRM (hotel and restaurant management) graduate currently enrolled at a culinary school for a diploma course. I am looking into my future and wondering if an airline culinary career is for me.

REGINO

Since you are my *tukayo*, allow me the pleasure of answering your questions.

I sought the help of a friend, Philippine Airlines executive chef Ian McKenzie. He is in the best position to help you on the matter.

How does an in-flight catering kitchen work?

Flight kitchens are built to serve all sky-bound traffic from small aircraft to the largest fleet. Of late, many flight kitchens supply on ground catering for trains and restaurant chains, with ready-to-eat meals.

The kitchen receives instruction from the airline food-and-beverage team. Each airline has specific menu requirements. These are then encoded, ordered, cooked and photographed.

It is very much like a large jigsaw puzzle that comes together. Once the food and equipment are assembled, the kitchen has a transport fleet of trucks, high loaders/"refrigerators on wheels" that are then loaded with the finished meals and beverages. These are then delivered airside then raised to the aircraft.

What are the biggest in-flight catering challenges?

Achieving constant quality food supply, putting food into small spaces, controlling many hands, meeting the needs of many, including dietary concerns and the requirements of VVIP and presidential flights.

What can and can't you do in terms of food preparation? Ingredients you would rather not use as they may perish or their flavor might diminish in flight?

Durian for its smell, beetroot stains cause nasty dry-cleaning bills, coconut-topped or crumb-topped cakes as crumbs on the floor may increase turn-around time for an aircraft—a cake may cause a flight delay.

Foods do not lose flavor in-flight. Altitude affects our sense of taste which is reduced by 10 percent with every 10,000-12,000 feet rise. So at around 37,000 feet cruising altitude there is a 30-percent loss of flavor. Flavors have to be big. Not a lot of salt is used.

CHEF Ian McKenzie

How many meals do you prepare in a day?

We do 8,000-10,000 meals. Some large flight kitchens are designed to do 70,000 meals per day.

What is airline food purchasing like? What are the restrictions and specifications/requirements?

We use 1,000 kg of frozen pasteurized eggs per week, fresh eggs are used at a rate of 600 per day. Rolls and breads must be no higher than an economy coffee cup. Cooked meat and fish portions are around 90 g each with no bones. Beef, chicken and fish will amount to one metric ton per day.

On-board food and related implements have space requirements. The food competes with the other users of space on board an aircraft.

Is there a future for up-and-coming chefs in the airline catering business?

Yes. But I would personally not recommend that a young cook starts in the airline field. Better to explore all facets of the industry then apply the skills to the airline.

A few schools in the United Kingdom, America and Europe have a syllabus that is more on management. In today's environment, time management is critical to provide quality and service at a profit.

The downside of airline catering is it can get repetitive and many cooks do not like the restrictions of plating and design.

Memorable experiences...

Going around Australia in a chartered 737 with VIPs and cost was of no issue.

Having run out of Bollinger champagne on arrival at Ayers rock airport, where there were no flight kitchens... I checked the schedule of the mail aircraft. Telephoned Sydney and Melbourne, some 1,800 km away, for 50 chilled bottles. Got them loaded on a smaller aircraft and got the captain's okay to make a stop.

On the same flight, I cooked in small restaurants and did the setting in an airport baggage area, plus baked a soufflé on board while praying for no turbulence. What a challenge!

On another occasion, as part of a judging team for the national pie competition, Ansett Airlines flew 1,500 entries from all parts of Australia. I was in charge of transporting two large 20-kilo baked pies for a promo.

This was one of the most difficult days of my life. We strapped the pies to two first class seats. To deliver them with no pastry cracks was a major effort to the bemused stares of other passengers.

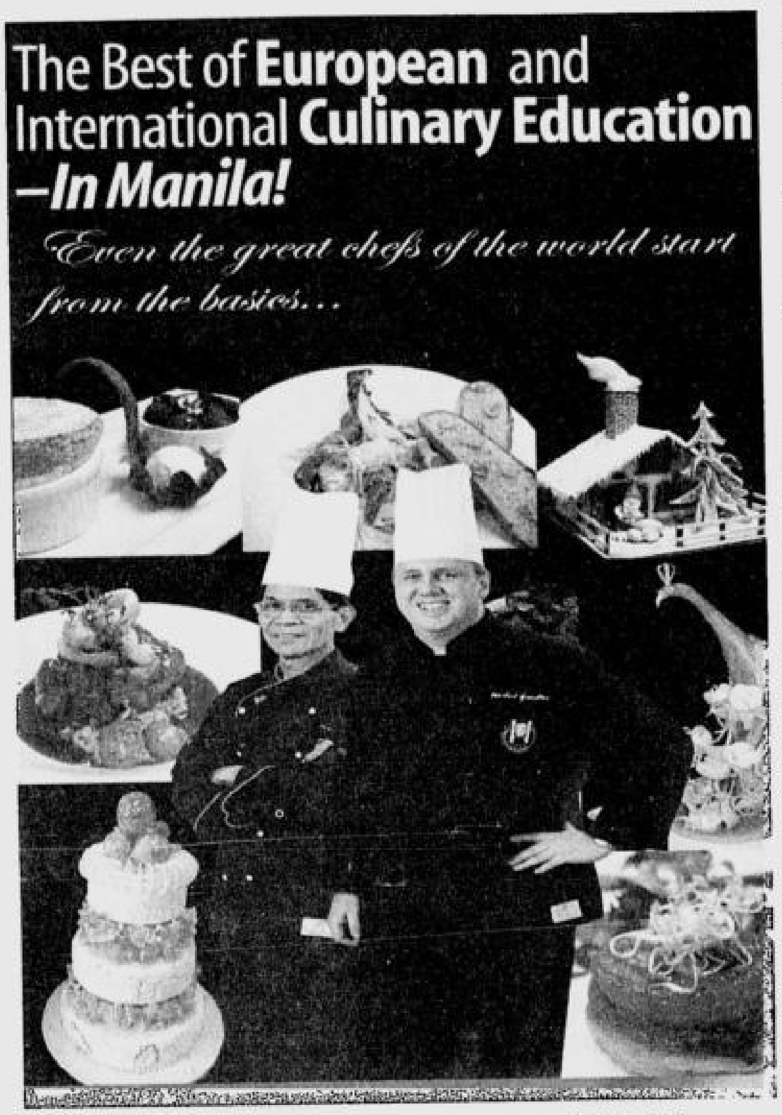
And the story of 300 passengers for a VVIP Chinese charter in Macedonia, Skopje where there were no flight kitchens and no high loaders. People had never seen a Boeing 747-400 land before!

At midnight I was pushing caviar and cheeses across the tarmac on a shopping trolley. On board, I prepared hors d'oeuvres of fresh white asparagus with beluga caviar and shaved white truffle.

Imagine all food carts loaded by hand, down the stairs, then on a flat bed truck to the city... And we had to pay cash for the refueling as they would not accept credit cards.

My class schedules for January are out. Call 9289296, 9273008 or 7221691.

E-mail the author at. raspiras@inquirer.com.ph



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Home-baked bread and roasted tenderloin

BAKE YOUR OWN BREAD OR DO SOMEthing different with tenderloin. Here are a couple of recipes developed by Heny Sison with the help of Glad Ovenware and Glad Bake Paper—Roasted Tenderloin and Bushman Bread.

Learn more recipes and kitchen and home management tips from Glad through Sison's cooking show, "A Taste of Life," 11 a.m. every Sunday, on IBC-13.

Ferna's Bushman Bread

3 tbsp Ferna Gold Eagle Active Dry Yeast
½ c warm water
1 tbsp sugar
1 c warm water
½ c dark molasses
1 tbsp salt
2 tbsp oil
2 c rye flour
2½-3 c all-purpose flour

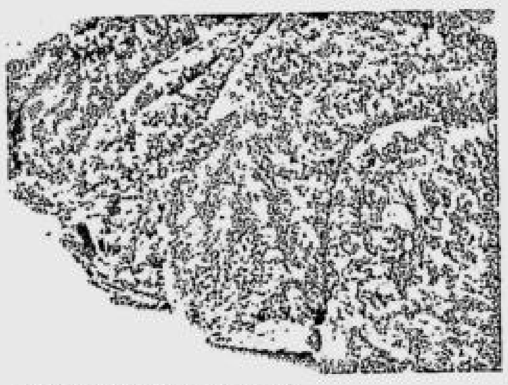
Soften yeast in water. Stir in sugar. Let stand six minutes or till bubbly.

In a large bowl, combine one cup warm water with molasses, salt, oil and rye flour. Beat to smoothen batter. Add yeast mixture. Stir to combine.

Work in flour till dough is smooth and no longer sticky, very pliable and elastic. Knead a few minutes. Let rise till doubled in a greased bowl. Punch down.

Shape into two large round loaves placed a few inches apart on greased and cornmeal-dusted cookie sheet or fill six mini foil loaf pans, greased and dusted in cornmeal, with the dough, dividing it evenly among the little pans.

Let loaves rise till doubled in warm place. Bake large loaves 375°F for about 30 minutes or till crust makes hollow sound when tapped. For small loaves, place pans on dry ungreased cookie sheets, a few inches apart. When doubled in size, bake at 375°F for about 20 minutes.



FERNA'S Bushman Bread

Roasted Tenderloin

2 k Monterey beef tenderloin, whole
½ c extra-virgin olive oil
½ c corn oil
4 tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper, freshly cracked

Trim and clean the tenderloin. Tie with a string or truss to secure the shape of the meat.

In a rectangular pan, combine the olive oil, corn oil and soy sauce. Mix well. Roll the beef to coat. Let it marinate for at least four hours. Can be done the night before.

Before cooking, place salt and pepper on a platter. Roll the beef, pressing firmly until the meat is well coated.

Preheat the oven to 350°F before cooking.

In a large non-stick pan or griller, on high heat, add a little bit of oil just until pan is coated. Brown the beef on all sides. When evenly browned, transfer the beef to a baking dish and place in the oven and cook for 35-40 minutes or until cooked to your liking.

Temperature: 135°F for medium rare; 150-155°F for medium; 160-165°F for well done.

GLAD
OVENWARE

ROASTED Tenderloin

YOU'RE INVITED!
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PHOTOS BY RODEL ROTONI

GINA Pareño, Best Supporting Actress

JOEY Reyes, Best Director

MMFF '06 makes official RP cinema's demise

By Lito B. Zulueta

REVIEW

WHILE SOME SECTORS have long ago written off Philippine cinema as dead—way before this year's funeral of a film festival—the death certificate and coroner's report should come only now.

And it comes with a P500 million tab, the target set by organizers for this year's festival gross earnings. This is much like the target set by professional "funeralists" when they invest in fake wakes. The "funeralist" is an underworld character who makes a killing out of holding a drawn-out wake for the corpse of a pauper whom nobody knows but who still gets a crowd because authorities relax the law on gambling during wakes.

Purportedly, this is to raise money for the burial; at the same time, it brings profit to many extortionists posing as local leaders. Plus, those who can't get inside state-run casinos could indulge their lust for games of chance by means no less state-regulated.

Horror of horrors

The rather sordid business of syndicate-run wakes is a fit metaphor for the Metro Manila Film Festival 2006, because our film industry bigwigs and festival organizers are really just a mafia of businessmen who cash in on the death of the Philippine movies—organizing extended vigils and gambling to drive up the stakes and collect a handsome profit.

Meanwhile, the state, as represented by the mayors of the metropolis, allows the petty yet sacrilegious crime in exchange for photo-ops with celebrities who are not only made up but made over several times because the movies are the mortician's territory.

Which illustrates the fact that we don't have filmmakers or film leaders, just profiteers. And this MMFF is not a festival, but an All Hallows' Eve celebration for a rotting corpse.

Not surprisingly, many of the festival entries in the past years have been horror movies, including what's probably the longest franchise in Philippine film history, "Shake, Rattle and Roll," a festival-grown creation and mainstay. It has definitely seen better days, though the latest installment is entertaining and may yet revive the franchise. But should the revival of a very commercial franchise be the business of the MMFF?

As I have been pointing out all along, the festival is a form of protectionism that has become more and more anathema to global free market. It appears justified when shielding local cinema from unfair competition posed by foreign films and giving it breathing room to create artistic products that would otherwise lose out to Hollywood tinsel.

Anti-consumer

I have maintained that the festival is anti-consumer. It seeks to make the moviegoer see Filipino movies—and only Filipino movies—at a time when he gets his Christmas bonus and, therefore, has the purchasing power to treat himself and his family to flashier movies from the West.

Like protectionism, the anti-consumer dimension of the festival could be justified as forced education.

Presumably, the festival movies are artistic products that reflect our culture and identity while tackling relevant currents or socio-historical issues that all Filipinos must confront and understand. But for many years now, noteworthy artistic entries with significant content have been the exception rather than the rule. Instead, the MMFF has laid out the red carpet to fantasy and horror movies that, by their very genre, are removed from social reality. Curiously, these are the same genres mastered to assembly-line perfection by Hollywood; the same theme-park entertainment and franchises—"Star Wars," "Pirates of the Carribean," "Spiderman," "X-Men"—that the festival seeks to exclude during the lucrative holiday season.

'Chimpoy' movies

Paradoxically, these are also the same types that festival movies ape in what should be a uniquely Filipino pathology known as "Chimpoy" (chimp and Pinoy). The festival has increasingly given Chimpoy movies the favored treatment. And so December becomes circus season for Philippine movies, with not a film fest, but a freak fest.

Even the festival's other "home-grown" franchise, "Mano Po"—about the Sinoy (Sino-Pinoy) saga—has sought to renew its flagging franchise this year with a teen romance that has dream sequences crudely adapting the popular Chinese costume drama fantasy. We don't know if this is an improvement from last year's "Mano Po 4," a comedy that tackles Chinese concubinage in a condescending, uncritical and tasteless fashion. What we do know is that "Mano Po" has become something of a self-inflicted ethnic joke.

The question is, why a series that has dangerously become a racist ridicule continue to get a slot in the MMFF. In the same manner, why do unabashedly commercial films, such as the "Shake, Rattle and Roll" and "Enteng Kabisote" franchises, seem to have a lock on the festival?

The reason is commerce sugar-coated by altruism. The MMFF needs utterly commercial entries in order for it to earn enough. The proceeds go to the Movie Workers Welfare Fund (Mowelfund), Film Academy of the Philippines, Motion Picture Anti-Film Piracy Council Inc., Film Development Council of the Philippines, Optical Media Board and, would you believe, the President's Social Fund?

No apologies

In short, the blatant commercialism of the movies owes to welfarism which presupposes "resource mobilization"—euphemism for tax. A film industry that has been taxed to death is further taxed to save it from death! And moviegoers are the vigil-goers forced to attend the wake of a carcass that embodies the three eternal verities of life—tax, tax, and more taxes.

Since the taxman gets a commission for the tax he collects, he doesn't leave anything to chance. This year, the festival targeted earnings of P500 million, which means that the nine entries should earn more than P50 million each. But for the entries to earn the astounding amount, they should be patently commercial, with no apologies.

The festival ensured this barefaced commercialism by rewriting the rules. It expanded the genres to cover horror, adventure, suspense, science fiction, fantasy and musical. An official of the festival was quoted as saying, "There are only three genres, but in [the] rules, we've expanded it to seven." A totally inane remark generic of the quality of festival officialdom. In any case, that expansion put the official stamp of approval on the freak fest.

The festival also rewrote the criteria. In the selection of entries, the highest percentage (40 each) is reserved for commercial viability and universal or global appeal, and the remaining 20 percent to Filipino cultural and/or historical value.

What the rewritten criteria should reveal is the Chimpoy Syndrome. "Commercial viability" and "global appeal" are thoroughly Hollywood affectations. They merely reveal the Filipino penchant to ape perceived superiors, which really masks a very basic inferiority complex. To be sure, the Weng Weng movies had "global appeal."

Apparently the same set of crite

MMFF/ D4

Some festival picks & pans

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

"I AM HAPPY THAT 'KASAL, KASALI, Kasalo' won all these awards, but I wish there was a festival free from intrigues. It seems controversy has also become an annual tradition," filmmaker Jose Javier Reyes said of the latest brouhaha that rocked the Metro Manila Film Festival, now in its 32nd edition.

"Kasal" brought home eight trophies—including the Most Gender Sensitive Film and Gatpuno Antonio J. Villegas Cultural Award—but lost out to "Enteng Kabisote 3."

Best Picture is the only award that "Enteng" won.

"Kasal" producer Malou N. Santos of Star Cinema questioned the decision onstage in her acceptance speech, and

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2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10:45 1.00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
3 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50
4 MANO PO 5
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
7 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
8 SUPER NOYPI
12.00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
9 TATLONG BARAHA
1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50
10 LIGALIG
1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00

ERMITA 38-7809 to 12

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
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2 LIGALIG
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4 MANO PO 5
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5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
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6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00
7 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
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3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
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4 SUPER NOYPI
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5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
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6 MANO PO 5
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7 LIGALIG
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8 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
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NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

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2 SUPER NOYPI
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
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5 MANO PO 5
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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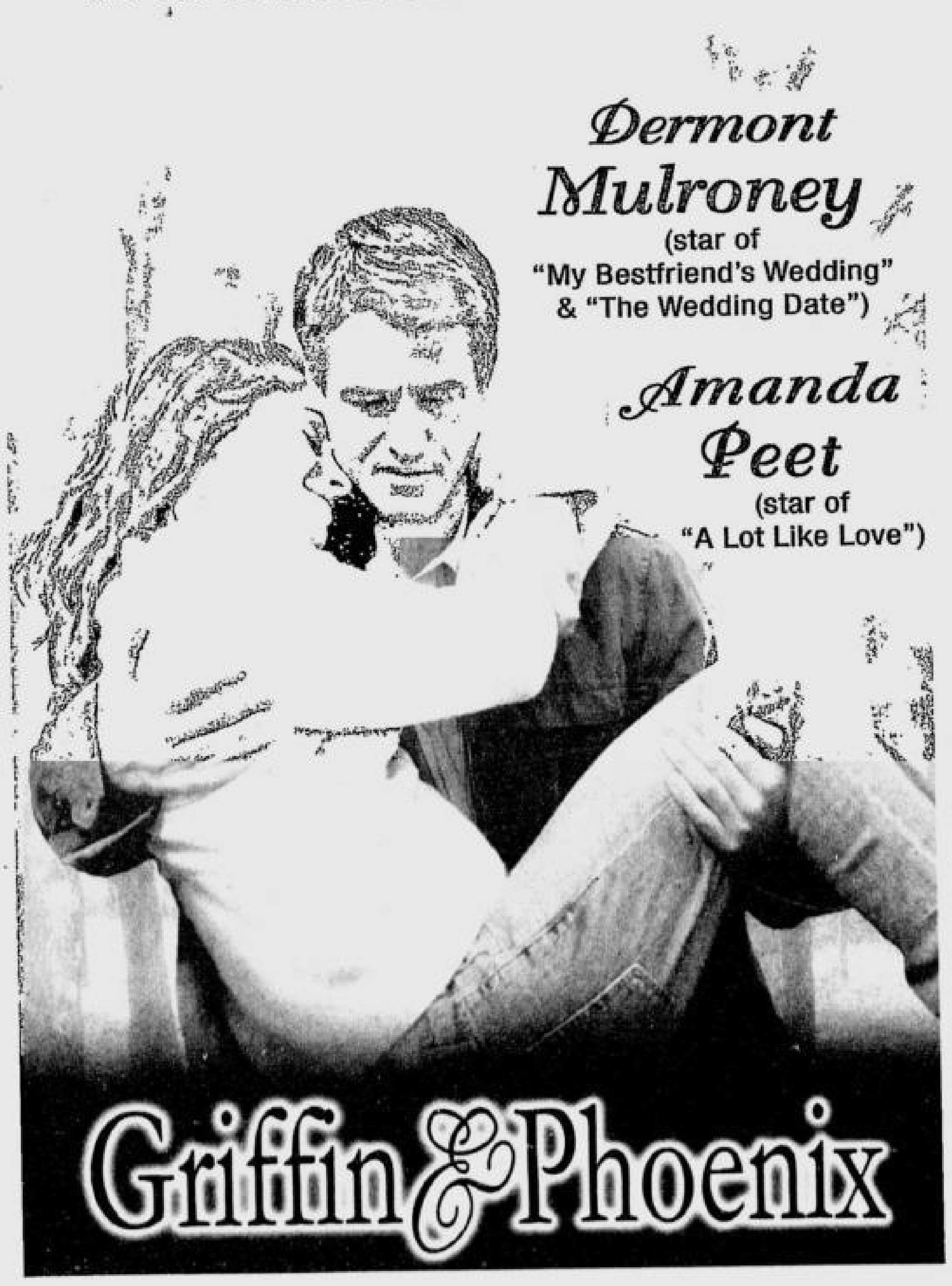

Some festival pick

off-stage in an interview with the INQUIRER.

She said, bristling, that the Best Picture result smacked of politics. "Star Cinema stopped joining the festival four years ago because of the politicking. This year, we were personally invited by Bayani Fernando (chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority, which spearheads the festival). I think I made the wrong decision [in joining this year]."

Protest

Four years ago, Star Cinema, movie production arm of ABS-CBN, fielded "Dekada '70," which lost out to Regal's "Mano Po."

A day after the awards ceremony last Dec. 29, there was talk that producers planned to file a formal protest against the victory of "Enteng," according to a source from ABS-CBN. This was denied by Santos.

"I don't think it will push through," Regal Films producer Lily Monteverde told the INQUIRER. "The system will never change. There's no use in complaining and arguing."

"Enteng" producer Orly Ilacad noted that controversy was nothing new to the MMFF. "Last year, it was about 'Kutob.'"

Last year, Monteverde and filmmaker Joel Lamangan complained after winning Best Picture ("Blue Moon"), but losing Best Director to Reyes (for "Kutob").

Ilacad insisted that he didn't expect to win this year—pointing out that he was not even present to receive the trophy. "I left early because I was hungry," said Ilacad.

Review

Filmmaker Joey Romero, MMFF screening committee member, suggested "a review of the criteria" for next year's film festival.

The jurors earlier explained that "Enteng" won Best Picture because 40 percent of the criteria consisted of "commercial viability." The remaining 60 percent is divided between artistic and technical excellence and global appeal, 40 percent, and Filipino cultural values, 20 percent, according to Espiridion Laxa, chair of the rules and legal affairs committee.

"They shouldn't use the word 'art' if commerce is the priority," said Best Actor Cesar Montano, who starred in "Ligalig," which he also co-wrote, directed and produced. "This [development] might discourage young filmmakers from joining."

Romero recommended separate awards for Top Grosser and Best Picture.

Montano quipped: "Why was 'Enteng' already declared winner [on the basis of sales] when the festival has a week more to go? What if 'Kasal' caught up?"

And will Star Cinema join next year's festival—especially since a "Kasal" sequel is already in the works?

"We are meeting on the sequel [soon]," Reyes said. "Jokingly, we call it 'Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo.'"

"We would reconsider only if they make clear changes in the criteria and the composition of the committee," Santos pointed out.

Final parade

There was talk that Star Cinema wouldn't take part in the additional parade cooked up by the MMFF on Jan. 2.

Although "Kasal" lead stars Judy Ann Santos and Ryan Agoncillo were no-shows, Best Supporting Actress Gina Pareño, Best Song composer Yeng Constantino and teen actor AJ Perez joined.

Ric Camaligan, MMFF executive committee member, explained that the Jan. 2 parade was finalized after the producers' request that the festival be extended for two extra days was granted.

The parade kicked off in SM Megamall and ended in Araneta Center Cubao.

Among the stars present were Giselle Sanchez, Ethel Booba, Polo Ravales and Joseph Bitangcol.

"There is a need to review the festival's rules," Camaligan agreed.

He also noted that the box-office performance of the entries on Jan. 1 was "very strong."

"Earnings are up by 10 to 15 percent compared to last year," said Manny

ks & pans

From page D1

There is a need to review the criteria for entries and winners, participants agree

Nuqui, executive committee member.

According to Camaligan, "Kasal" earned P78 million and "Enteng" P94 million, as of Jan. 1.

"'Enteng' is ahead by P16 million," said Ilacad.

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G

3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12:50, 3:15, 5:50, 8:25, 11:00
G

4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
2:45, 5:35, 8:25, 11:00
PG-13

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MTRCB GP
1 15, 3 45, 6:15, 9.00
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MTRCB PG-13
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MANO PO 5: GUA AI DI G 12:30,3:00,5:30,8:00,10:30	ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH G 12:40,3:05,5:30,7:45,10:20	KASAL, KASALI, KASALO PG13 1:40,3:50,6:00,8:10,10:20

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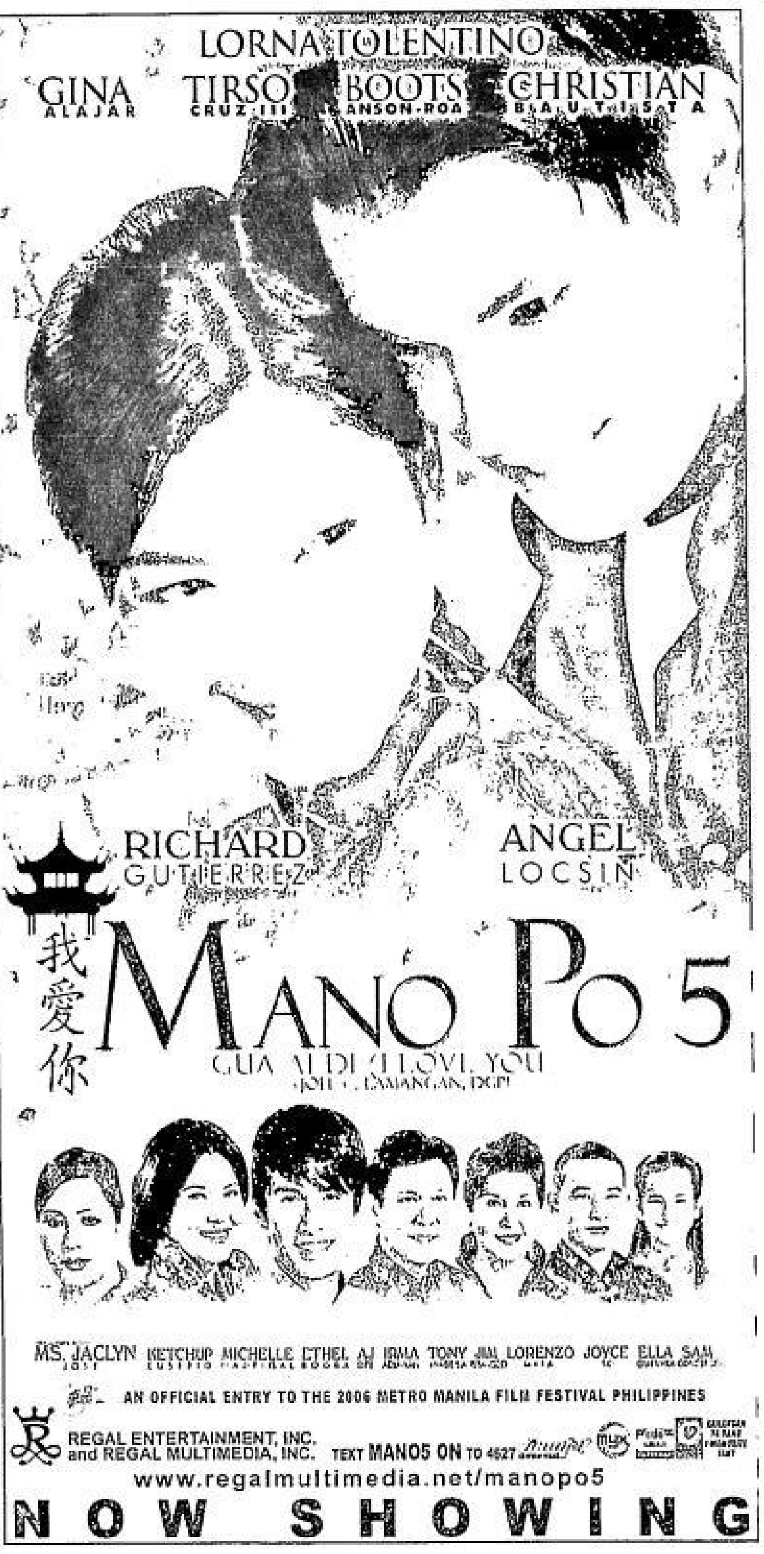
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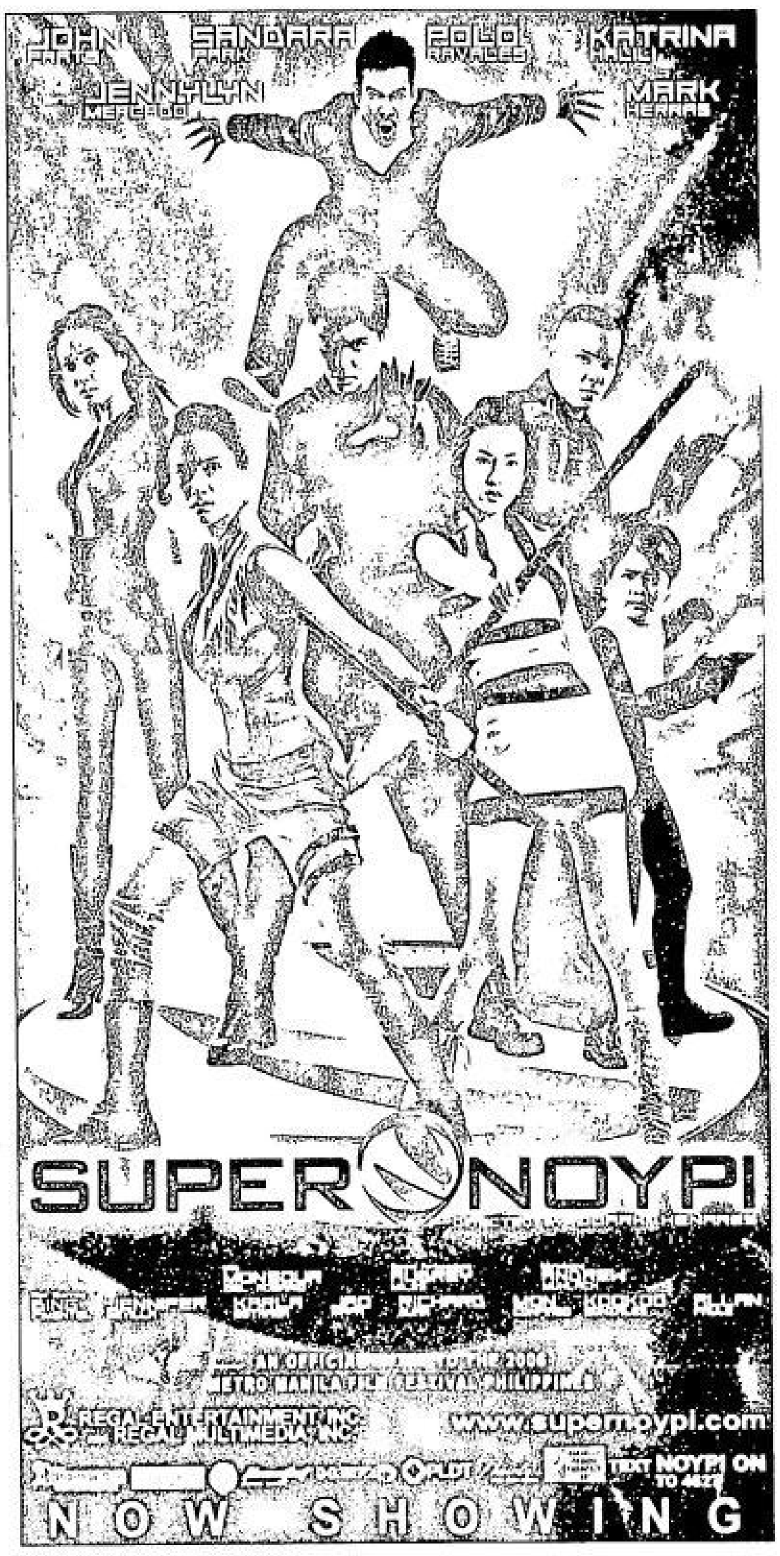
JOHN
SANDARA PARK
POLO RAVALES
KATRINA
JENNYLYN MERCADO
MARK HERRAS
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ZE MOVEEH
Joel C. Lamangan, dgpl
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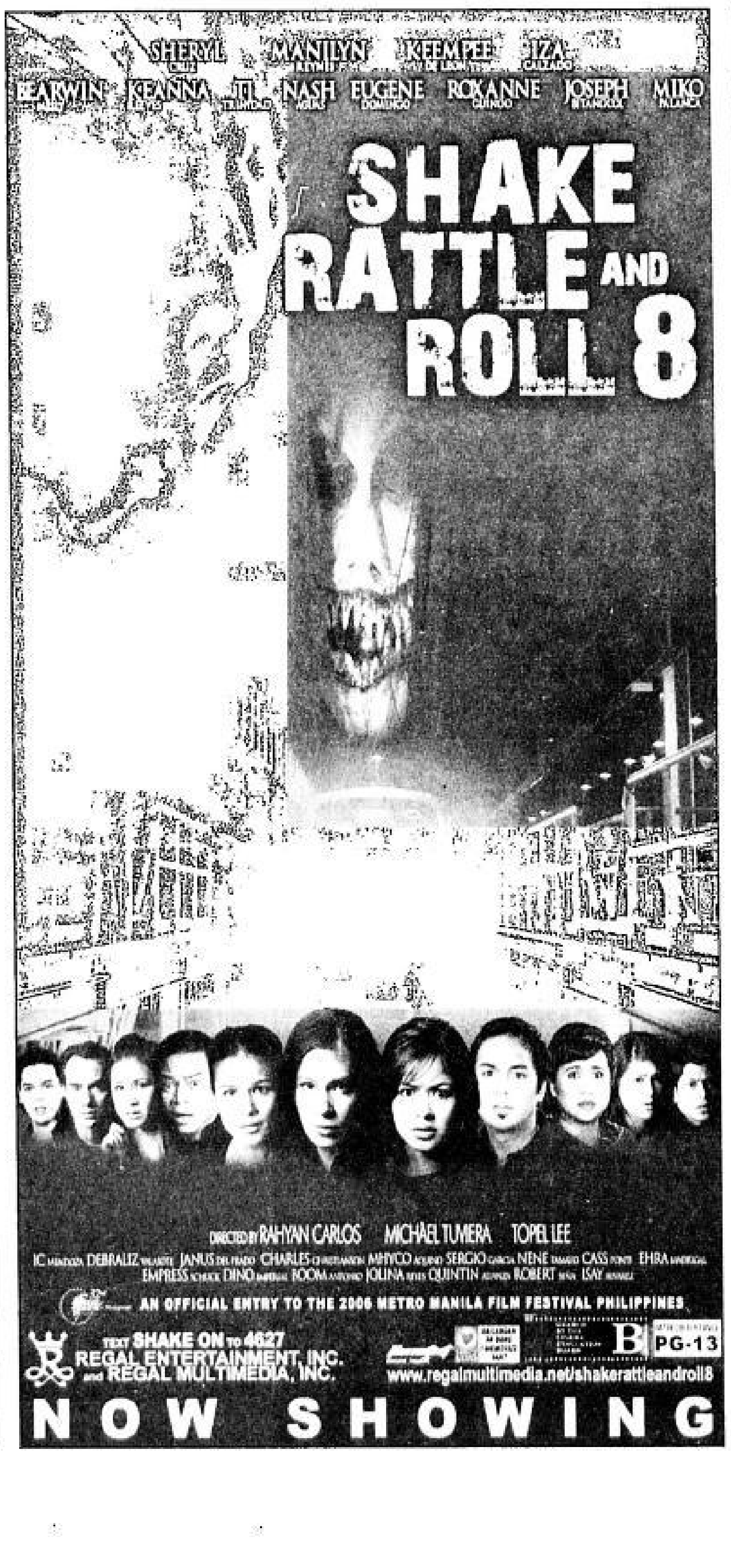
SHERYL CRUZ
MANILYN REYNES
KEEMPEE DE LEON
IZA CALZADO
BEARWIN
KEANNA
TJ TRINIDAD
NASH AGUAS
EUGENE DOMINGO
ROXANNE GUINOO
JOSEPH BITANGCOL
MIKO PALANCA
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DIRECTED BY RAHYAN CARLOS MICHAEL TUVIERA TOPEL LEE
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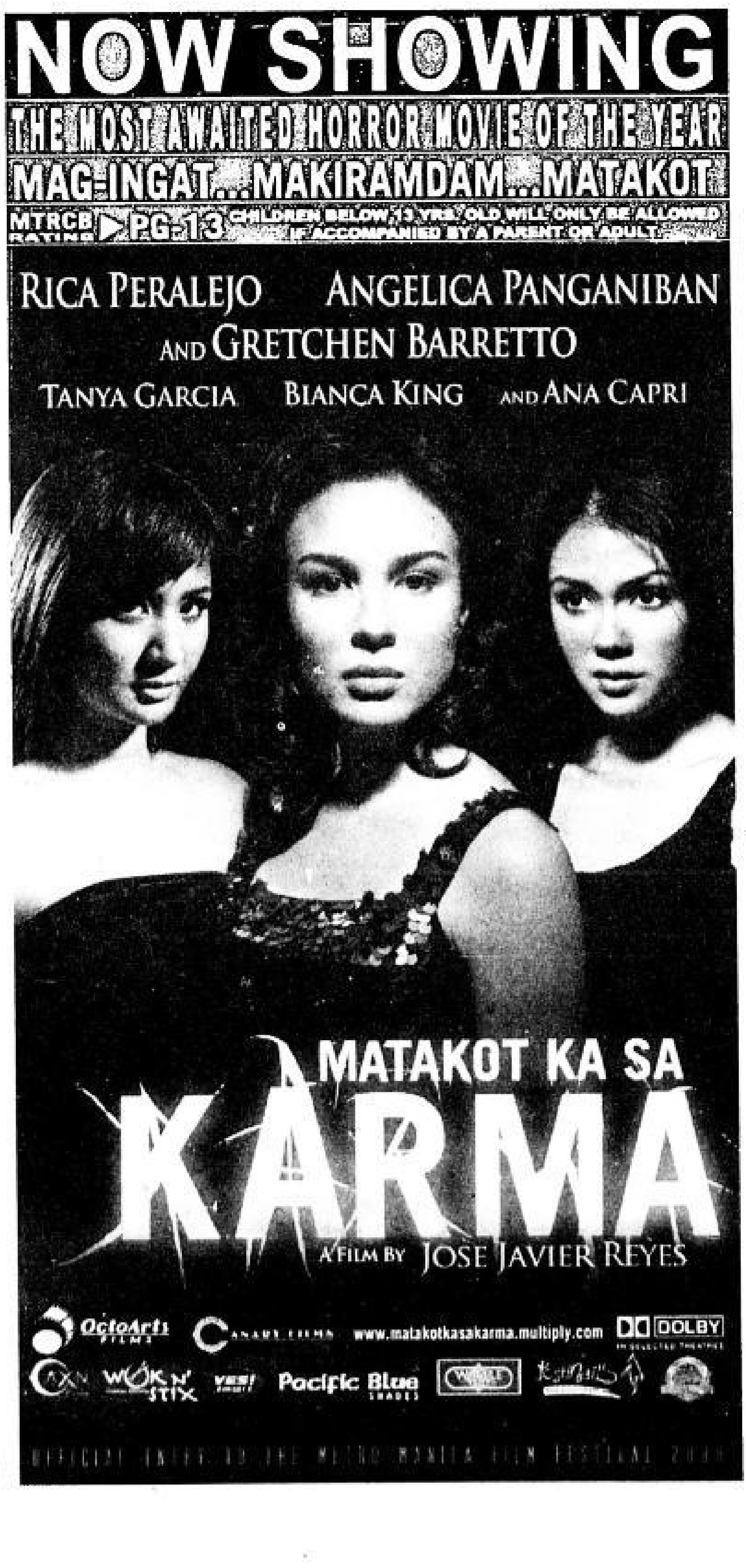
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OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2006

Lino Cayetano now seeing KC Concepcion

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

BIANCA GONZALES AND DIREK **LINO Cayetano** tried to save their relationship after she got too close for comfort with **Zanjoe Marudo** inside the PBB house. But just like a broken vase, it's hard to put back the pieces together again 'cause the crack remains.

I remember Bianca telling me that after PBB, she and Zanjoe really made a conscious effort to keep their distance from each other. But maybe her breakup with Lino was bound to happen. Heard that Lino is now seeing **KC Concepcion**. Last Christmas, they were seen in Sonia's Garden Tagaytay. Direk and Mega's *hija* hit it off instantly when they met in Paris.

Apres tout, it's not the most romantic city in the world for nothing. Or as the French say, "Paris *est une ville qui protégé l'amour* (Paris is a city that protects love)."

LINO and KC met in Paris. INQUIRER PHOTO

KC and Lino make a charming pair. Hopefully, their "made in France" romance will have an abundance of French kisses and no French leave.

From France, we move to Brazil. Heard that a gorgeous Brazilian model is extremely smitten with **Gwen Garci**. To the point that he even asked her to join him in his native land. Gwen seems lovestruck too so she's staying in Brazil till February.

After her tumultuous relationship with **Andrew Wolfe**, Gwen deserves more *amor*. As they say in Brazil, "*Un corazon solitario no es un corazon* (A heart that's by itself is not a heart)." For better, for worse and for good, huh, Gwen?

'Lovespell'

ABS-CBN's "Love Spell" ushers in the new year by giving its avid fans a certified "Line to Heaven," a magical love story with a twist that reawakens **Joross Gamboa** and **Roxanne Guinoo**'s undying love for each other. It starts airing Jan. 7 after "Your Song."

Roxanne admitted in "Sis" that she misses Joross. My son IC relayed it to Joross when they taped for "Maalaala Mo Kaya." He seemed blasé about it. Joross' reaction was "*Talaga*?" Maybe he just wants to lick his own wounds.

Will their "Line to Heaven" reunion disconnect all the "party lines" between them and make them say "Hello" to each other again?

'iPBA'

Inside stories, exclusive scoops and the lighter side of the Philippine Basketball Association are just some of the things to watch out for in the newest TV magazine show "iPBA... Ang Bagong Laro," which premiers on Jan. 7 (3:30-4 p.m., ABC 5). Hosted by **Asia Agcaoili** and presented by PBA Entertainment, the show will feature the league's top players in a revealing Q & A segment, stories behind the games, controversies around the league and more.

"We'd like to make PBA even more show biz via this show," says the PBA bright boy **Jacque Ruby**. Showbiz and PBA go together well. It's like there's a magnet that pulls cagers towards actresses and vice-versa. My heart was also once "dribbled" by a PBA player so I know what it's like.

Heard that **Joseph Yeo, Alex Cabagnot** and **Mark Caguioa** are all eyeing Asia. Who among them will make the three-point shot and win her heart?

Twin victory

Octoarts Films and M-Zet TV Productions threw a victory party to celebrate the success of "Enteng Kabisote 3 (The Legend Goes On & On)." The **Vic Sotto** starrer is the top grosser and also Best Picture in the MMFF. It is on its way to becoming one cult classic in Pinoy cinema.

Boss **Orly (Ilacad)** and the great team behind the fantasy movie must be saying that reality is the best fantasy of all as they go laughing all the way to the bank.

Entrepreneur Cogie

Actor **Cogie Domingo** and his lawyer-dad **Rod Domingo** will open their ONE Greenhills Shopping Plaza (Annapolis Street, Greenhills) on Jan. 12. Aside from the wide selection of goods at lower prices, they also have a spa, parlor and medical clinic.

Cogie plans to put up a stall selling car accessories.

Is ONE his way of preparing for the day he will be "one" with Lovi? He smiles, "I'll take it one step at a time!" Enjoy every moment and peso, Cogs!

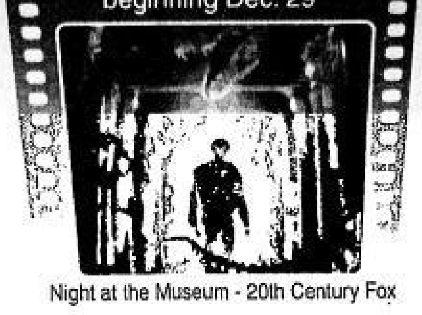
Personal

Kudos to Washi Washi Club of Palawan and their newly elected president **Mr. Ray "Lakay" Lagasca**. Nothing wishy washy about them 'cause they always give their 100 percent.

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Top 10 movies at the North American box-office for the three-day weekend beginning Dec. 29



Night at the Museum - 20th Century Fox

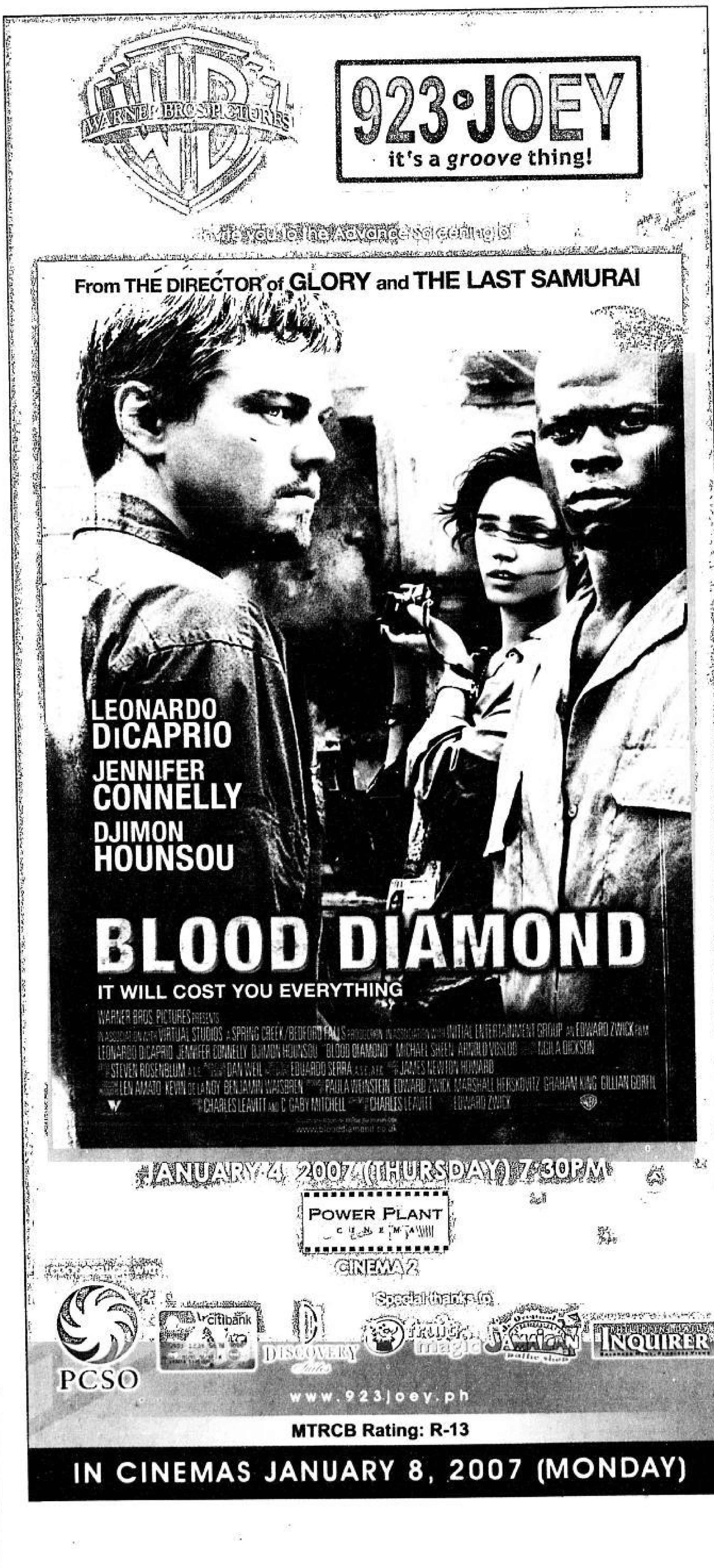
TW	LW	Title	Gross	WR
1	1	Night at the Museum	$37.8 mln	2
2	2	The Pursuit of Happyness	$19.3 mln	3
3	7	Dreamgirls	$15.5 mln	4
4	5	Charlotte's Web	$12.0mln.	3
5	3	Rocky Balboa	$11.4 mln	2
6	4	The Good Shepherd	$11.2 mln	2
7	6	Eragon	$8.5 mln	3
8	8	Happy Feet	$8.0 mln	2
9	10	We Are Marshall	$7.8 mln	7
10	9	The Holiday	$6.7 mln	4

This Week, Last Week Weeks in Release

☆ New release

Based on studio estimates compiled on Sunday

REUTERS



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MMFF '06 makes official RP cinema's demise

From page D1

ria in the selection of this year's entries was used in the final judging so that "Enteng Kabisote" won Best Picture because it supposedly registered the highest earnings. "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" won the lion's share of the awards, but was adjudged only second best—even if the domestic comedy has a good handle on its subject that is of "Filipino cultural and/or historical value."

This shows that the judges put the premium on "commercial viability," and that the festival is really about quantity, not quality. The jurors didn't even hide their motives. They could not be accused of imagination—or *kahihiyan*.

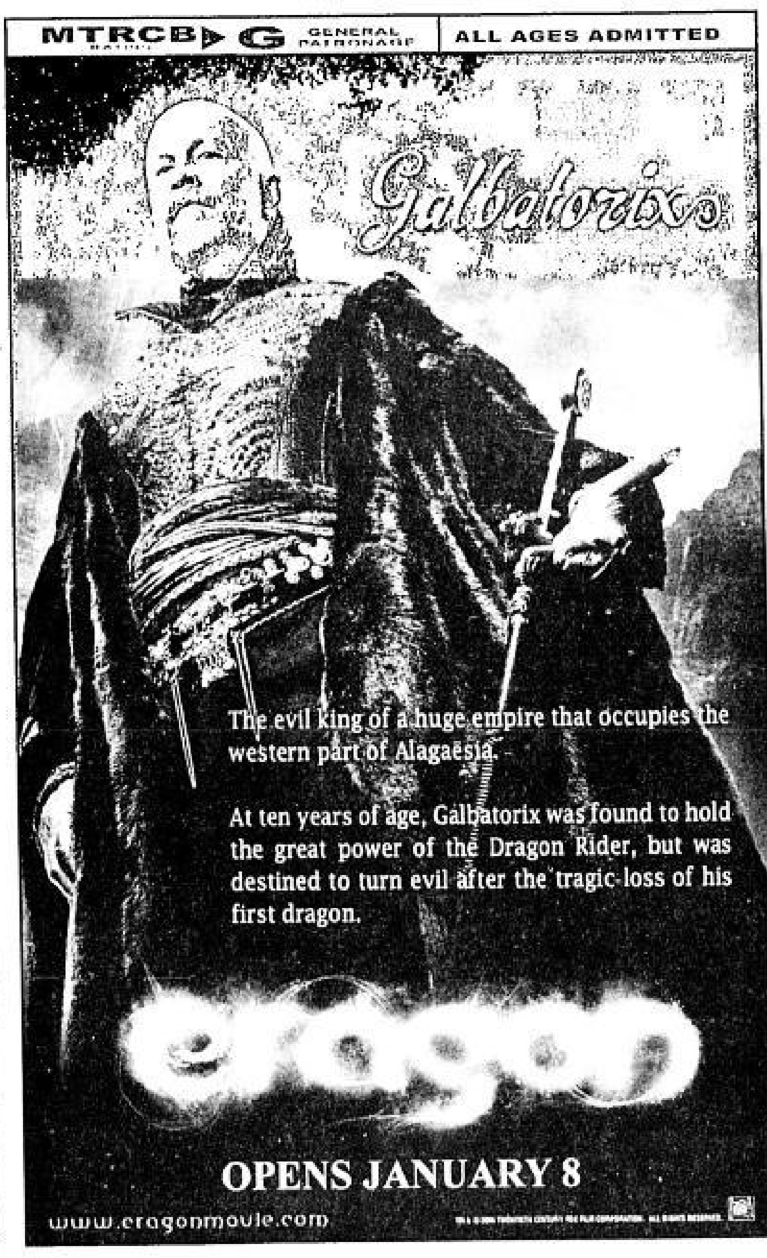
After the greats

Because of its naked attempt to rewrite the rules so as to canonize commercialism and jettison relevant artistry, the 2006 Metro Manila Film Festival has made official the death of Philippine cinema.

The death certificate is hereby signed exactly 30 years after the 1976 Manila Film Festival that screened three gems of the second golden age of Philippine cinema—Lino Brocka's "Insiang," Eddie Romero's "Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayon Ngayon?" and Lupita Concio's "Minsa'y Isang Gamu-gamo," all more or less along the genre of social realism.

Other Tagalog movies shown that year were social realist films that made their powerful artistic and cultural testaments despite the prevalent commercialism of the era—Brocka's "Lunes, Martes, Miyerkules, Huwebes, Biyernes, Sabado, Linggo," Mike de Leon's experimental "Itim" (a dark take on the Filipino's passionist Lenten traditions), Gil Portes' "Tiket, Mama! Tiket, Ale! Sa Linggo ang Bola," and Ishmael Bernal's "Nunal sa Tubig."

Greed has killed Filipino cinema. And the merry ringing of the festival's cash register—music to the ears of the mafia of "funeralists"—is really the dirge that lays the dead to rest.



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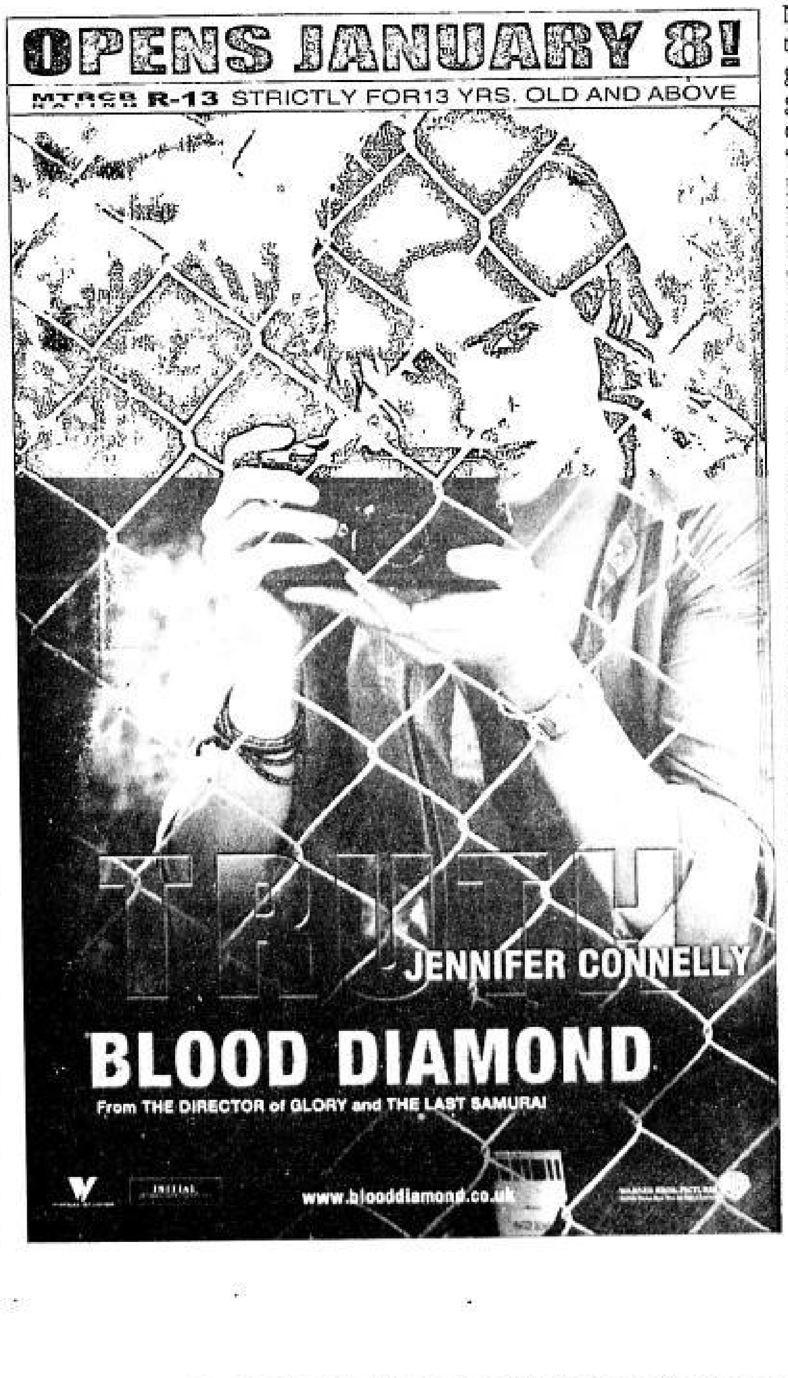

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